

Fragments of the Golden Fleece

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FRAGMENTS OF THE GOLDEN FLEECE

"Fragments of my fleece that I have left up the hedges of my life." - Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr.

Special thanks to Joan Smith

A Glorious Beginning

Engraved on the southwest pediment of Washington's Union Station is an old Spanish proverb reminding the traveler that "He, who would bring home the wealth of the Indies, must carry the wealth of the Indies with him." During our fourteen years in Washington, I had occasionally pondered these chiseled words, and I pondered them again at length in 1950 when President Truman appointed my husband to be the United States' Ambassador to Greece and we departed Washington's Union Station to go to live in Athens. Without taking inventory, it was evident that my intellectual baggage did not include the wealth of the Indies. However, no one ever went abroad with a greater wealth of expectancy, a higher sense of mission, or a more academic brush with protocol.

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By 1950, times had changed considerably from the early days when our State Department allegedly dispatched its emissaries with but two instructions:

1. Always sit with your back to the light.
2. Be sure to wear a clean white shirt.

The Department took pains to imbue me with a sense of responsibility and to teach me the Ps and Qs (protocol and quintessence) of the Foreign Service. I learned how to seat a Navy admiral, an Army general, and a Marine general at the same dinner table without rupturing military equanimity. I learned that while bracelets were permissible on the outside of one's glove, rings must always be worn inside, and that both gloves and fruit must be peeled before eating.

Through the sluggish process of social osmosis, I had already learned to be constantly on guard against the unmentionable Ds of polite formal conversation: dividends, disease, domestics, and descendants (in the order of their unmentionability). I knew that conversation well, a diplomat was a peculiar species who existed without any ostensible means of support, never enjoyed poor health, never propagated, and apparently did his own housework. Though on occasion, *gaucherie* superseded deliberate dumbness, I usually fought the good fight and maintained a frustrated silence on the tabooed topics, except when in the bosom of my lenient kin.

Now suddenly appeared old Greek hands who imposed further restrictions on my conversational repertoire by adding two more forbidden subjects to the proscribed list: Greek politics and the Greek language. Greek politics were obviously a subject for me to shun like the plague. If one couldn't speak intelligibly about her own two party system, she should never be so bold as to hold forth on someone else's fourteen party system. The subject of politics automatically tongue-tied me, but the Greek language on the other hand seemed an innocuous conversation piece. The seasoned Greek hands patiently explained

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that Greek is a plural language. Besides the classical Greek, there are two modern Greek languages, the vernacular and the literary or scientific language. This diversity of their mother tongue, if not exactly a *casus belli*, is a nationally controversial issue that has split the Greeks into two camps, the Popularists versus the Purists, literally so to speak. An ambassador's wife, especially one from a friendly nation, would be ill-advised to harp on such a discordant theme. One afternoon's briefing was devoted entirely to the protocol of the diplomatic call. I learned that upon arrival at his post an ambassador's first official act is the presentation of his credentials to the sovereign of the country, after which he is required to call on the prime minister, the foreign minister, certain government officials, and his diplomatic colleagues in order of their seniority. As soon as the ambassador has completed his calls, protocol demands that his wife call on the other wives in the same sequence. In that one afternoon's session at the Foreign Service Institute I learned almost all there was to learn about the ritual of initial calls.

Armed with this degree of higher education, I sallied forth determined to make friends for Uncle Sam or be shipped home from Athens on my shield. On the diplomatic front, I made a glorious start by unwittingly offending all my diplomatic colleagues before I even saw them.

That feat was achieved quite easily, with practically no exertion on my part. It happened that before we departed Washington, the wife of our American Minister in Athens graciously wrote for permission to give an evening reception for us as soon as possible after our arrival in that city. We gratefully accepted the honor, the date of which was left to the hostess' discretion. So as our locomotive steamed out of Washington's Union Station, the American Embassy in Athens was delivering invitations for a certain Tuesday night's reception to the diplomatic corps and Greek *creme de la creme*.

We landed at the Athens airport on Friday afternoon, and the next morning the Embassy requested a date for my husband to present his credentials to King Paul at His Majesty's

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earliest convenience. His Majesty's earliest convenience was on Monday, the day preceding our Tuesday reception.

According to custom, on Monday morning the King sent His ancient Rolls Royce and mounted palace guard to escort the Ambassador to the Palace for the formal presentation of his diplomatic credentials. The Ambassador's wife was not included in the traditional ceremony, but she and a bevy of equally impressed American youngsters watched the splendid parade from the vantage of a curbstone across the street from the Palace gates. In the afternoon Their Majesties, King Paul and Queen Frederica, informally received both of us at Tatoi, the charming summer Palace in the country.

The Ambassador spent the entire next day, Tuesday, calling on the other foreign ambassadors and government officials until alas! Tuesday evening eventually overtook us before I had the opportunity to make initial calls on my opposite members in the diplomatic corps.

Though I didn't realize it then, for the practical purposes of diplomacy, I was still officially in Washington. My colleagues could acknowledge neither my existence on earth nor my arrival in Athens until I had first called on them. The letter of protocol forbade their meeting me for the first time at a party in my honor. Being totally oblivious of the fact that one's calls served as one's passport to diplomatic society, I didn't dream that I was to be a social parish, an untouchable in the diplomatic caste system, until my calls were consummated.

That evening the official and social elite of Athens and all the ambassadors came to our debut party, but none of the ambassadors' wives, except the kindly Nationalist Chinese's, attended. Our charming hostess, Mrs. Harold Minor, seethed in diplomatic silence, but for me ignorance was bliss, and I was not sufficiently acquainted with Athenian society to miss the absentees. Moreover, I was already happily speculating on the pleasure of future dinner parties with so many unattached ambassadors on tap. Athens' obvious ratio

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of eligible bachelors was a handsome improvement over Washington's. Unquestionably, I had at least arrived in hostess heaven.

The next morning, unaware that I had been publicly chastised, I took in hand my appointment list and merrily embarked on my visits to the ladies who had stood at home the previous evening. My first stop was at the French Embassy to pay my respects to the Countess de Vaux St. Cyr, whose husband, by virtue of long residence in Athens, was dean of the diplomatic corps. At the door of a slightly seedy mansion I was admitted by a proper butler and ushered into a rather small dark sitting room to await my hostess. There was just enough faded elegance to set me musing about the house, which no doubt had been, at the turn of the century, one of the proudest show places in Athens.

Soon the chic Countess appeared, offered a cordial, and stared sadly at me across the sofa as I hopelessly struggled to make some polite French sounds. When my allotted fifteen minutes had expired, I took leave, regretfully aware that in my first encounter I had made no concrete contribution to French-American relations and prayerfully hoping that I had not been the rock on which those relationships would founder.

At the British Embassy my chastening was more forthright. Lady Norton, the Ambassador's wife, received me in a sunlit drawing room with windows draped in gay sun-flowered print. She first offered a gin-and-lime and then, without the slightest reference to the boycotted fete, plunged into a forceful rationalization of Protocol (capital P). With vigor she declared that strict observance of rules was necessary to a successful career in the diplomatic service.

"Rules," she expounded, "are the mainstay of diplomacy, and each rule is grounded in reason. Ignorance of the rules is no excuse for careless behavior. In the diplomatic corps the slights and oversights, which are daily brushed aside in ordinary life, become international insults, easily fomenting international incidents. To offend a diplomat is, in

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effect, to offend his country, and no person should be expected to rise above an offense to his native land.”

Never did I dream that the little sermon was being preached at me, the iconoclast of Protocol who in one fell swoop had offended the sovereign countries of France, England, Canada, Italy ad infinitum around the globe. Touched to the heart by Lady Norton's apparent kindness in sharing with me her private shortcuts to effective diplomacy, I nodded agreement with her every syllable. Not only was I convinced that her dissertation had already spared me years of painful trial and error, but I also felt quite certain that her heartening manifestation of Anglo-American friendship boded well for the future of the world.

In all history no Greek sage ever cast pearls of wisdom to a hungrier pupil. If she hadn't finally paused for breath, thereby terminating the visit, I should be yet in the British Embassy's sunny drawing room, sipping gin-and-lime and guzzling at the fountain of Lady Norton's vast knowledge and professional experience.

Later when our week-old American newspapers arrived in Athens, I received my first storm warning of the tempest in the teacup. Spread in the papers for all to see were pictures of the Countess and me under the headline:

“U.S. Envoy's Wife Gets Teacup Snub”

Having traveled comfortably in the safe inner eye of the hurricane, I was aghast to learn the scope of the storm. Fortunately, by that time the gale in Athens had blown itself out to sea. I had already completed my calls and, over thimblefuls of Turkish coffee, become friends with most of the ladies in the corps, including the indomitable Lady Norton, who became my special tower of strength.

In the course of a year, our Anglo-American entente developed into a real friendship that persisted through thick and thin, fair and foul, high and low. Ours was a hands-across-the-

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sea alliance that even survived the low moment when I artlessly greeted Lady Norton, on her return from Switzerland, with, "My dear! You look simply wonderful. Did you have your face lifted again?"

Barbed though it sounded, my question had been asked in all sincerity. Indeed, Lady Norton had returned looking exceedingly well and rested, and people had told me that several years earlier she had gone to Switzerland for a face lifting, after which she had invited her friends in Athens to a party so they might, once and for all, examine her scars and cease talking about her operation. I secretly hoped she was going to show me her fresh scars.

However, that was not to be, for she replied in quite matter-of-fact tone, "No one ever has her face lifted more than once."

While my candor might easily have shattered a lesser bond, our friendship was equal to the strain.

And most assuredly, her first little lecture on protocol was well given and even better remembered. The rule book does not simplify complicated situations. In numerous social crises, I was grateful to protocol for being the convenient whipping boy who obligingly took the heat off the bewildered hostess. When dinner guests frowned at finding their places below the salt, the hostess could always take cover under the sheltering arms of the protocol office. She could avert disaster and sometimes even restore equanimity by whispering, "The Foreign Office arranged tonight's table seating. Greek protocol, you understand."

A Royal Greek Holiday, B.C. (Before Cyrus)

By December, it was clear to me that we were not only at the best possible post but there at the best possible moment. For us the gods had contrived a happy marriage of place and time, for that month the Duke of Edinburgh escorted Princess Elizabeth, heir presumptive

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to the British throne, on her first trip to the land of his birth. On the Greek island of Corfu, in a villa called Mon Repos, the Duke had been born Philip of Greece, first cousin to King Paul. Although he had renounced his Greek title when he became a British subject, to the Greeks he was still Prince Philip, and Greece eagerly awaited its native son who was bringing his young English wife on her initial visit to the Hellenes. British and Greek flags fluttered from every lamp post in Athens as the social and work-a-day worlds expectantly prepared a royal welcome for the royal couple. For the first time since 1914, the glittering ballroom of the Palace in Athens was to be the scene of a brilliant evening reception.

While dressing for that occasion, I nervously yanked a zipper from its determined track and had to change my dress at the last minute, but in the hasty excitement I forgot to change my shoes. Later at the palace, I discovered myself wearing emerald green and gold slippers and a pale blue and silver gown. However, on that regal evening I could have modeled leotards and still gone unnoticed, for the visiting young couple stole the show.

The local guests had eyes only for the beautiful English Princess and her dashing affable husband. Elizabeth, charming in a stately court manner, was an English beauty in her own right. Radiant with diamonds, diamond diadem, diamond necklace, and diamond brooches the size of my little finger, she wore a ball gown of ivory satin brocade that perfectly matched the magnolia texture of her complexion.

The next evening, Dmitri Levides, the Grand Marshal of the Palace, and Mrs. Levides invited us to an intimate dinner party for the Princess and the Duke. Mr. Levides' intimate party proved to be a seated dinner for fifty to sixty guests including, besides the King and Queen of Greece and the royal visitors from England, certain royal relations from Germany, a score or so of Greek friends, and from the diplomatic corps the British Ambassador and Lady Horton and the American Ambassador and his lady. If it wasn't exactly our definition of an intimate evening, it was by all counts our most royally gay evening. One is tempted to say that probably the irrepressible Prince Philip never attended a dull party, for his buoyancy would have animated even the dreariest economy.

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To the romantic and lively tunes of a Greek guitarist, the dinner party progressed orderly through a string of courses. Then suddenly, between the dessert and fruit, the guests began bandying flowers as well as songs across the room. The table was stripped bare of every floral decoration as the Levides' dining room exploded in a mock war of the roses. Fortunately, the flowers were not potted, or many a guest besides the King and Queen would have been crowned that night.

After dinner, there was dancing in the drawing room, sedate ballroom dances, brisk Greek folk dances, and even a kind of Paul Jones that democratically shuffled royalty with commoners. To my glee, at the end of one particularly vivacious dance, the Princess Elizabeth led the dancing queue of guests out into the soft December night, across the garden and back into the house. I hadn't grown up in Little Rock for nothing, and "follow the leader" was just my dish of tea. If only the lovely Elizabeth as "the Princess who never smiles," could have witnessed that spontaneous performance, they would have revised their staid opinion in inch high type.

That night we encountered the royal stamina for late evenings. Kings and queens, princes and princesses, all are loath to wind up an evening, say good night, and go home. Because no guest, so long as he can stand upright, may depart before any royalty departs, a royal presence can prolong any gathering until a week from tomorrow. The only way one can leave a party in advance of a royal guest is to suffer apoplexy and be carried out feet first. We decided that the royal aversion to leaving a gay party was a heritage from the medieval days when the royal ancestors had dwelt in cold draughty fortresses that offered only comfortless asylum. Because the barren promise of comfortless asylum never moved anyone to desert warm-hearted company, the processes of natural selection evolved a royal breed of indefatigable dancers, quite capable of literally dancing the night away from home.

Several days after Mr. Levides' party, we overtook Elizabeth and Philip on the road to Corinth. Standing on the bridge that spans the Corinth Canal they were, in typical

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tourist fashion, studiously photographing the depths of the wondrous cleft connecting the Sardonian Gulf and the Gulf of Corinth.

Since those light-hearted days in 1950, I have wondered what it costs a young couple to wear the heavy crown of England. In the midst of a world fraught with tensions, and in this case particularly the tragic tension between Great Britain and Greece, I hope that Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth, and Prince Philip can recall with certain quiet pleasure their Greek holiday of a happier era.

Greek Revival

It was fortunate that we celebrated our first evening in Athens by climbing the Acropolis to see the Parthenon, for many weeks passed before I gazed again at close range on those mellow marble columns. However, that one climb convinced me that I had squandered my youthful years. How I wished I had been a good girl at school and studied the textbooks instead of the date books! To atone for my mis-spent girlhood, I decided to cram with abandon. Immediately I engaged a Greek teacher, a French teacher, a teacher of ancient Greek history and, just to balance the curriculum, enrolled in a Greek folk dancing class.

My husband wasn't a man who opposed female education. In fact, he usually abetted it even when his wife was the female at stake. However, he was at heart a Greek believing in moderation, and all of a sudden his wife was immoderately galloping to class seven times a week. In the beginning, my mastery of the Greek words for "yes, no, good morning, thank you, it doesn't matter" carried me far in his good graces. But when at the end of the month, I still couldn't order a simple breakfast without the intervening services of an English-speaking secretary, he began to have misgivings about my language aptitude. When I explained that *matia*, the Greek word for fried egg, also meant eye, he lost his appetite for breakfast.

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So that he might better appreciate the difficulty of modern Greek, told him about my confusion with pote and pote.

“Except for the accent, the two words are pronounced exactly the same, but in meaning they are poles apart. One word means 'when' and the other word means 'never', but I can never remember which word means which.”

“Good heavens!” he exclaimed. Suppose a Greek friend telephones to invite us to dinner, and instead of asking 'when', you reply 'never'! You have only a fifty-fifty chance of coming up with the proper adverb.”

Not daunted by his lack of sympathy, I continued dashing to class with the zeal of a high school senior cramming for the college boards. As we became more drawn into the diplomatic vortex, I was sometimes hard put to find time for my home work. One morning, my husband discovered me at my desk conjugating Greek verbs before breakfast. His look made me feel guiltier than Elsie Dinsmore on the frightful day that her father discovered her slyly playing a forbidden game of jacks. Daddy Dinsmore had pointedly ordered Elsie upstairs to her room, but my husband was more subtle.

Deciding that the moment was propitious for thwarting my intellectual renaissance, he reminded me, “Don't all your Athenian friends speak either French or English? Do you suppose they will wish to contend with you in Greek?”

“But my French is what the King calls the literal American's French, the 'oh vous avez, avez-vous?' variety, and I speak it with a deplorable Little Rock accent. Besides, don't you think it flatters the Greeks to have a foreigner speak to them in their mother tongue?”

“Your life expectancy hardly allows time for you to speak to the Greeks in their mother tongue. But in case your longevity should confuse statistics, the State Department, even

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if it knew what your were up to, isn't likely to leave us in Greece long enough for you to master the language.”

There were, however, some aspects of my study program which he admired. He humbly confessed to having swelled with pride over my pursuit of ancient history. He was admittedly impressed by my comprehension of the city-states, the amphictyonies, and the various leagues and trusted that I was equally well informed on NATO. He was overawed by my coming to grips with the Persian War and Sicilian Expedition, but he wondered, “Have you observed that the modern Greek's interest lies with the Byzantine rather than the ancient or classical period of their history?”

I moaned, “Perhaps my friends do have an intellectual and spiritual affinity for Constantinople, but, Jack, I can't start studying Byzantine history. How could I keep all those emperors straight?”

Apparently, he never had intended me to study Byzantine history, for he suggested that I try serving diplomacy on the home front and let the Byzantine emperors rest in peace. So dropping Greek history, and, for the time being, French lessons, I concentrated on Greek folk dancing, particularly the Kalamatiano and the Karagouna. They proved to be formidable social weapons, vigorously serving diplomacy at the palace, in the villages, and on the home front. Unfailingly the dance breached the language barrier, for just as certain as Greeks would rather talk than eat, so they would rather dance than talk. While most of their dances somewhat resemble our American reel or square dances, there is a certain Cretan dance called the “Five Times Dizzy” that makes our square dance seem as sedate as a nineteenth century minuet. That one I left to the Cretans and the acrobats.

New Address: Athens

The Greeks spin an enchanting legend about the birth of their beloved barren land. They say that in the beginning when God created the world, He had at hand a full treasury of rich raw materials with which to adorn the face of the earth. Hither and yon around the

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globe He benevolently bestowed his largesse of primeval forests, lush green valleys, broad fertile prairies, and majestic rivers. At last nothing remained in God's once replete treasury except a handful of rocks, which He tossed indifferently into the sea. Piling on one another, the rocks formed a heap of boulders so harsh and incongruous with the rest of His creation that God in His infinite compassion was moved to meliorate this blotch on the landscape. But there was no ready poultice to relieve the blemish, for all the towering trees and green grass had been spent elsewhere! Then suddenly reaching skyward God plucked a rainbow from the heavens and draped it like a chiffon veil across the mass of rocks. Thus did He create Greece, a country of rock, sea, and sky, mercifully redeemed by the colors of the rainbow.

The color spectrum of Greece flashes in my memory whenever I think of our Athens house with its blindingly white stucco walls and sun drenched marble terraces, radiating beneath a lapis lazuli sky and reaching towards the violet view off Mt. Hymettus. The edifice was a rambling Mediterranean villa, built near the suburbs by a prominent Greek family, the Lydises, for their private use. When the Lydises moved to Switzerland, the United States Government bought the house for the American Minister's residence, but the Athenians persisted in calling it by its old name, the Lydis House. Indeed, for many people it continued to be the Lydis House even after its elevation to the exalted rank of American Embassy Residence.

Before the Peurifoys went to Greece, the American Ambassadors had resided in the Maximos House, a luxurious Athenian townhouse owned by a former prime minister and leased for a number of years to the United States Government. Maximos House was a Greek dream wrought in Marble elegance. In Greece where wood is scarce and expensive, even modest homes employ as a building material the more abundant, cheaper native marble to a degree exceeding an American Bank architect's most extravagant phantasy. In the case of the Maximos House, however, the lavish use of marble was not a concession to economy, for no expense had been spared in its construction and embellishment. The white marble foyer opened into an enormous hall lined with high

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backed medieval chair stalls and paved with alternating blocks of black and white marble. Lady Morton once confessed that at formal receptions that checkered expanse of floor was for her a silent challenge to a game of “hop scotch” from which she had forcibly to refrain.

There was much to recommend this imposing mansion for the role of Embassy Residence. It stood across the street from the Royal Palace, overlooked the Royal Gardens, and lay within several blocks' distance of downtown Athens and the Ambassador's office at the Chancery. Certainly, as the gregarious Greeks often reminded us, it was an ideal residence for diplomatic entertaining (not to mention “lying in state”).

But we hardly expected to entertain twenty-four hours a day, and as a home for an American family with two sons and a penchant for pets, the house had obvious disadvantages. There was no garden for pitching pup tents and cor-ralling puppies. The only honest to goodness bedroom-with-bath was adjacent to the main entrance downstairs while the only sleeping quarters available to children were a second floor apartment, reached by a steep staircase, a city block away at the rear of the house. I couldn't possibly imagine myself skidding over those marble acres in the middle of the night and sprinting blindly up those dark stairs to minister to an ear ache, and I doubted that an SOS beamed from the aerial penthouse could ever penetrate the nether regions of the downstairs bedroom.

Prodded by a jealous determination to preserve our private life intact, we had resolved to live abroad as nearly as possible as we had lived in Virginia. Although official obligations would necessarily make inroads on our privacy, we weren't going to permit officialdom completely to undermine our family and rupture its communications system. So, however suitable Maximos House may have been for our predecessors, whose children had grown and gone, we knew the Peurifoys and Maximos House could never achieve domestic compatibility.

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Before leaving Washington, my husband had completed arrangements necessary to move us into the more appropriate Lydis House. Our Foreign Buildings Office had even added and furnished a large formal drawing room that considerably raised the tone of the new official residence. With its spacious airy rooms, its heavenly view of Mt. Hymettus, and its reaches of walled garden, any American family would have felt at home there. Even before our boys were delivered from the airport, the downstairs had assumed a comfortable "Peurifoyd" air. (Even after that first day the mingled fragrance of tuba roses and jasmine were always to recall to my mind a special room in that special house in Athens.) But still the spectre of Maximos House haunted us, for the United States Government was stuck with a long lease which could not be brushed aside. The high rent on that unoccupied mansion was not only too rich for our tax-paying blood but also likely to prove apoplectic to the Congressional Appropriations Committee.

Just before all was lost, our great friends, Mr. and Mrs. Roger D. Lapham, the new E.C.A. administrator and his wife, providentially moved to Athens. With minimum twitches of conscience, my husband and I easily persuaded ourselves that the Maximos House was the answer to an E.C.A. administrator's prayer. If only the Laphams liked the house as much as we wanted them to like it! But on that line we were optimistic. Having lived for a generation in a townhouse in San Francisco, how could they possibly object to a townhouse in Athens? Granted that in San Francisco they overlooked a creamy expanse of the golden Gate, in Athens surely they would settle for the view of the Royal Gardens and screech of the Royal peacocks.

To insure the Laphams' seeing Maximos House in the most favorable light, I personally escorted them on a tour of the premises. To give them a really attractive packaged deal, I even included in the bargain the extravagant French chef who brewed, baked and sulked in the catacombs of the basement kitchen. With wagging tongue and hands, I so effectively extolled the advantages and beauties of that great house that for one sickening moment I was convinced that we had erred in not keeping it for ourselves.

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However, of all the visitors that residence has received through the years, none were ever so fleet of foot as Roger and Helen Lapham. After a few polite glances Helen asked, "Where in this house does one sit to write a letter?"

Then and there, I should have acknowledged defeat, but at that time underestimated Helen's dedication to her voluminous correspondence.

However, when Roger muttered, more to himself than to us, "Seems that this house has more ballrooms than bedrooms," I knew I was licked. Obviously, the Laphams had never "dreamt of dwelling in those marble halls."

Luckily, soon after my dismal real estate venture some mastermind, whose name deserves to be recorded, achieved at the Embassy a brilliant stroke of diplomacy by legally extricating our Government from the Maximos House Lease. Later, the Greek Government purchased it to use as the official residence of visiting foreign dignitaries, a purpose for which it was ideally designed. It comforted me to realize that at last Maximos House had met its destiny as the Athenian Blair House.

Mr. and Mrs. Lapham, who knew so well what they didn't want, chose to move into a villa rather near ours but with even a more intimate view of Mt. Hymettus.Mountain in Mauve

Mt. Hymettus is mentionable because, apart from being one of our family's favorite excursion sites, its barren bulk has dominated the Athenian skyline since long before the Parthenon was even a gleam in Pericles' eyes. Millenniums ago the Hymettus haze conferred on Athens the title of "violet crowned city." In the course of a day, that moody mountain can run the color gamut from genial orchid to sinister purple. Its color is ever shifting and ever beautiful. And to see the full moon float from behind Hymettus into the clear evening sky is to see a moonrise for the first time.

Tucked away in the folds and pockets of Hymettus' elephantine hide are several orthodox chapels and monasteries, our sons' favorite being the Kaisariani monastery dating from

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the tenth century. Like so many early Christian churches, Kaisariani rose from the ruins of a pagan Greek temple, a temple to Aphrodite which had enshrined a sacred spring. Ovid, in the "Art Of Love", describes this spring whose life-giving waters were highly recommended to the sterile and pregnant women of Athens. Cults wither, temples decay, and gods supplant gods, but hallowed ground remains forever hallowed. Aphrodite's temple has vanished, Christianity's monastery languishes in a state of dusty deterioration, but Athenian women still seek the blessing of fertility in the magic water of the sacred spring.

Our children never failed to find excitement in a long dark tunnel where, they assured me, the good Orthodox monks used to hide from their Turkish overlords; and all of us loved lighting candles in the Byzantine chapel and exploring the crumbling cells of the erstwhile holy fathers.

My favorite Hymettus retreat was the monastery of St. John the Hunter. Unlike Kaisariani, it was not buried in a ravine but boldly commanded a site on the arm of the mountain. From the promontory of St. John the Hunter one could mentally skim the gnarled periphery of the mount or straightway depart on a journey to the stars.

There the earth abounds with wild flowers, asphodel, lavender, cyclamen, sage, thyme, and heather, which the knowledgeable bees readily convert into the most delicious and famous honey in the world. Hymettus was a natural food factory for the gods. The Princess Helen told us that, except for one hiatus, the busy little honey-makers had staunchly plied their trade for thousands of years and for various races of men. It was during the German Occupation of World War II that the diligent insects suddenly vanished from the Attic scene. No one can say whether they were allergic to Germans or to cannon fire, but curiously enough when the Germans departed at the War's end, the bees swarmed again to their Hymettus haunts.

Her Imperial Highness, the Princess Helen

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Her Imperial Highness, the Princess Helen, was the special favorite of my husband. She had utterly captivated him on the day of our initial call at her villa, and from that time I was helpless to do more than applaud his good judgment and connive at his devotion.

Though no longer a young woman, she wore her age with such distinctive grace and charm that I could hardly wait to grow as old as she. Yet the Princess had never really grown old; she had simply enjoyed more birthdays than most of us. If the passing years universally conferred such beauty as hers, the face lifters would soon be out of business.

She was born a Romanov, a Grand Duchess of Russia, the granddaughter of the Czar, niece of a later Czar, and first cousin to the last Czar, Nicholas II. As a darling of the Imperial Family, she grew up amid the brilliance and splendor of the Russian Court, and as a young lady she was famous throughout Europe for her beauty and graciousness. Her marriage to handsome gifted Prince Nicholas of Greece was a love match that produced three lovely daughters, Olga, Elizabeth, and Marina. The latter is best known to Americans as the elegant Duchess of Kent.

Not for long was the Princess Helen, or the Princess Nicholas as the Greeks affectionately called her, permitted to enjoy the bliss of peaceful family life. Sharing the fortunes of the Greek Crown, she passed many years commuting to and from exile. Even during the periods when the monarchy was restored, the Royal Family allegedly lived with a suitcase packed in readiness for sudden flight.

Meanwhile, in her native Russia, the Bolsheviks massacred most of her friends and relatives. In one blow, a world was swept away, leaving her bereft of family, country, and childhood home. Then Prince Nicholas' untimely death deepened her bereavement and widowed her at an early age. Later she watched her three daughters undergo bitter personal tragedies in their adult life. The miracle of Princess Helen was that though sorrow mounted sorrow, breaking her heart again and again, her soul remained whole.

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Miraculously, her faith never surrendered and she escaped personal embitterment, the ultimate in human tragedies.

During World War II, when the Greek Royal family fled before the German invaders, the Princess Helen, past middle age, chose to remain in Athens. Even the bees evacuated, but Helen, in her suburban villa within view of violet-crowned Hymettus, fearlessly sat out the War and the German occupation. The Germans pressed her to denounce their common enemy, the Communists, but the Princess steadfastly refused to be exploited for Nazi purposes. She reminded them that at that time the Russians were allies of the Greeks and that they, the Germans, were the common enemy. She asked only to be left alone in her small corner. Yet for the Greeks she was a symbol of stability. Her physical presence in ravaged Athens gave her countrymen moral comfort and a sense of continuity in the midst of war.

When we knew her, she was living in semi-retirement. Her chief pleasure was the annual visits of her devoted daughters from abroad. Occasionally, she flattered us by accepting an invitation to lunch or dinner at the Residence. On those days, our cook outcooked himself, and our children outpostured the angels. Even Bing was friskier, for a dog always recognizes a loyal friend when he meets one.

The Princess had an irrepressible weakness for dogs, especially stray mongrels. In Athens, she was recognized by men and beasts as a one woman SPCA. Her villa was a sanctuary for four-footed waifs who acknowledged her their patron saint and had plainly marked the sign of tramp on her door. No stray was ever turned away hungry. Although there was no official registry of all her adopted pets, on each visit I hurdled a strange dog on the threshold and encountered another newcomer reclining beside the Princess' chair in the sitting room. It was apparent that in the Princess' villa a dog could feel at home without being housebroken.

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While she strictly limited her public activities, she faithfully continued her personal charities among the unfortunate white Russians. The fullness of her life she shared with all sorts and conditions of men. Kings, churchmen, political leaders, and refugees visited her. All found her a manifold reservoir of penetrating wit and wisdom, and all were affected by her nobility, which transcended the finite limits of an imperial title. Hers was a nobility of character, ennobling all who knew her.

Peloponnesian Pilgrimage

Early in April, Mrs. Mary Carolou, the beauteous American-born lady-in-waiting to Queen Frederica, came to tea to present on behalf of Their Majesties an invitation to a three or four days' cruise-tour of the Peloponnesus. Expecting to start from Athens the next Sunday, they planned to tour the land by day, and sleep and sail aboard the Royal Yacht by night. Besides the King and Queen, the party was to include only six persons, Sir Clifford and Lady Norton, the two Peurifoyes, Mrs. Carolou, and Dr. Maiamos, who was private physician to the Royal Family.

We were most eager to accept the attractive invitation. Apart from being tempted by the pleasure of such excellence company, my husband strongly believed that an American ambassador should avail himself of every opportunity to become better acquainted with his assigned country and its people. Moreover, he was especially curious about the Peloponnesus because most of the Greek-Americans had emanated from that region.

As usual the ambassadorial calendar was committed a month in advance, but we knew that Miss Frances Burton, my husband's clever secretary, had a genius for juggling dates and appointments to everyone's mutual satisfaction. Just in time, we painfully remembered that the Embassy had already issued invitations for a reception at the Residence on the next Monday in honor of Mr. Cocke, the president of the American Legion. So though tempted to accept, we were compelled to decline the invitation from the Palace.

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Later that evening, just before we retired, Mrs. Carolou telephoned to say, "Their Majesties will be happy to postpone the sailing from Sunday until Monday night."

That enabled us to keep the cake and eat it, too. We could be on hand to greet Mr. Cocke and our guests and still sail with the King and Queen later in the evening. The Peloponnesus was, after all, not to be the unturned stone in my husband's career.

So on April the ninth at 8:30 P.M. while an American Legion reception was going great guns at the Embassy Residence, my husband and I, unmissed and unsung, stole down the back stairs and sped away to Piraeus, the port of Athens, where we boarded H.M.S. Pyrrpolis a few scant seconds before the arrival of the King and Queen.

The Pyrrpolis (Firefighter) was a former mine sweeper that had been converted, somewhat against its will, into a yacht suitable for His Majesty, the King. By midnight, we were sailing through the Corinth Canal against a Greek sky hung so low that we could have touched the stars and we but dared. On the steep left embankment we grazed a small niche containing a crude statue of the Roman Emperor Hadrian, the Andrew Carnegie of the Graeco-Roman world. The guide book devotes pages to describing the littered remains of Hadrian's vast building program which extended from Britain to Jerusalem during the golden age of Rome. All at once the heavens swelled, and we floated into the broad black waters of the Gulf of Corinth.

Early next morning, cannon fire from shore routed us from our bunks. The Pyrrpolis had dropped anchor off the small port of Alghero, and the good Algherians were greeting their Sovereigns with a cacophony of cannon, bells, and cheers. The King, royally understating the situation, remarked, "My compatriots do like noise."

"Yes, Sir! Noise and numbers." I agreed, overwhelmed by the size of the welcoming committee swarming the dock. For a coveted glimpse of their popular King and Queen, Greeks had traveled many miles from the far corners of the Peloponnesus.

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As our party was piped ashore to the clamor of army, church, ancivilians, even the youngest Peloponnesians screamed, "Zito Vassilev."

Then the King drove us in his car to a village six miles away where we boarded a quaint railroad car for the climb over the mountains. The old fashioned steam locomotive was straight from the pages of a child's drawing book, and the coach was nothing more than an open roofless box car, carpeted to the last centimeter of floor space and furnished with two substantial armchairs and the proper number of other comfortable chairs. With the King and Queen enthroned in front on the two armchairs (which in Greek are appropriately called polithrona), we tooted away and traced a colorful path through the florid countryside. Nothing exceeds the fair face of Greece in springtime, and on that special spring morning the fair face was an enchantress who exploited every charm, first to bewitch and finally to enthrall. Our susceptible little train flirted outrageously with a coquettish mountain stream whose course led us through a spectacular gorge. One instant we were in the abyss, gazing through a blur of pink almond blossoms at a waterfall high overhead. Then scaling the beetling cliff, the next instant we were poised aloft a celestial peak at the very gate of Heaven. In the chasm below us, the coy mountain stream wantonly hurdled the waterfall and frolicked out of sight. Across from us, stark mountains stood in rugged silhouette against bluer, snow-capped mountains etched on the sky. On the last horizon gleamed the sea, for in Greece, the sea is always visible if one but climb high enough to catch the view.

At some appropriate point between heaven and earth, the little train halted for a picnic lunch. Kits of cold meat sandwiches were unpacked, and bottles of American soft drinks were uncorked.

To my husband, Sir Clifford pertinently observed, "Have yoconsidered that we are being paid to do this?"

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At that moment, pinching myself to prove I was awake, I decided that an ambassador's job was the richest in all the world.

After lunch, our plucky train persisted to the end of the line where a small but articulate group of peasants awaited their King and Queen. A septuagenarian shepherd dedicated to Lady Norton an original poem in blank verse. My forays on the Greek language had not yet penetrated the mysteries of blank verse, but Lady Norton's gratified mien indicated that the poem esteemed the British in general and Lady Norton in particular.

Transferring to tiny donkeys we plodded over fields of daisies and poppies and through orchards of blossoming pear trees in the vague direction of Megaspelion Monastery. The Greek donkey may be the smallest in the world, but he is no ass, for he has a large flair for the points of the compass and as keen awareness of the force of gravity. Clinging like a fly to a wall, my donkey inched around the sharp angle of a steep precipice and delivered me into full view of Megaspelion, pasted like a postage stamp on a vertical cliff which reaches some four hundred feet into the Greek sky.

At first glance one cannot determine whether the monastery is carved from or painted on the wall of sparing rock. One sees only the facade of a modern building six to eight stories high, glaring like a multi-eyed barnacle from the base of the towering cliff.

That day the monastic sentries were on the alert. As soon as their Majesties rounded the curve within view of the monastery, the air bust into a mist of bells (as the poet said). The atmosphere grew dense with a clangor bouncing from peak to peak and swelling the valley. Ever since then, instead of counting sheep on a sleepless night, I simply hearken to the echoes of the Megaspelion bells. That heady symphony is guaranteed to drown all competitive musings.

Megaspelion, which means "big cave", was founded in the fourth century by monks from Salonika. Although the institution itself dates from the earliest Byzantine era, a few years

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before World War II a ravaging fire destroyed the ancient building and many sacred treasures. Today a fairly new building houses the ancient brotherhood whose ranks are annually diminishing in number.

This prevailing tendency to diminution threatens with extinction the Orthodox monasteries in general. As the monks' average age increases, their ranks numerically decrease. Soon only a handful of elderly monks will remain to carry on the tradition. In order to subsist, the Orthodox orders desperately need a vigorous recruiting program. Unless they can attract a host of novices, many monasteries will become ghostly relics of another age, and the twentieth century will mark the end of some of Christendom's oldest institutions.

After a fervent welcome, the monks guided us around the premises, reverently displayed the cherished treasures and holy relics, and celebrated a special service in the chapel. Then they conducted us to a large sitting room with an aerial view of the valley and, in customary Greek fashion, served the inevitable refreshments. Hospitality is a compulsive Greek virtue. Every house offers a guest something to eat or drink, be it a complete meal or only a glass of water with a spoonful of jam (which is audibly recommended for the liver).

The special delicacy at Megaspelion was a cordial made from rose petals, and, proving that "a rose is a rose is a rose," it tasted exactly like a rose. However, just for the record, I did not become a rosaholic and can even now admire a rose from a distance without the slightest craving to devour it.

After posing for the usual pictures, we departed on our patient donkeys and journeyed to a point where several palace automobiles met us.

With the King, an enthusiastic driver, behind the steering wheel of the lead car we drove through the village of Malavryta. The tragedy of Malavryta was recorded in its streets lined with women in black. The preponderance of women in the village was the tragic consequence of World War II. One cold December morning during the occupation, the Germans, in reprisal for Greek guerrilla atrocities, had burned Malavryta to the ground and

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murdered every male of fourteen years and older. In 1951, the surviving population still bore mute testimony to the massacre of over a thousand Greek men and boys.

Not far from Malavryta is the monastery of Agia Lavra, famous as the birthplace of the Greek Revolution. There on March 25, 1821, the Bishop of Patras was protagonist, as well as curtain raiser, in the first scene of the dramatic struggle for independence. At the close of a religious service, the courageous bishop unfurled the Greek flag and proclaimed the national revolution. It is reasonable to assume that the noble monks at Agia Lavra never had known anything to equal the feverish excitement of that tumultuous day in 1821 until I arrived in 1951 and asked to be directed to the ladies' room.

Later, while piloting us over the rugged mountains of the Peloponnesus, the King revealed his weakness for a “shaggy dog” tale. In the course of swapping stories, we even borrowed from the children's repertoire of “little moron” exploits. One that tried the patience of the group was about “the little moron who tiptoed across the medicine cabinet because he didn't wish to disturb the sleeping pills.”

The King regaled us by describing a cartoon from, I believe, an American magazine. The picture showed three boys peering into a cage at the zoo and discussing the animal inmate in the following succinct vocabulary: “Snake.” “S'not! 'Snail!” “S'neither! 'S'neel.”

As we skimmed over the country road to join the ship on the coast, the Queen suddenly called to her husband, “Stop! Stop!”

The car screeched to a halt alongside a peasant woman who had been waiting, heaven knows how long, with her paralyzed son to see the King and Queen pass their way. The startled mother hoisted the crippled lad high in her arms so that the Queen might speak to him and touch him. It was a simple revelation of the dramatic role of the monarchy in Greece.

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Because of Their Majesties, something significant had happened in the lives of two peasants who would remember so long as they lived, "Yesterday I talked with the Queen;" or "Last month I saw the Queen;" or even "When I saw the Queen five years ago." It was the same with the throngs crowding the dock and the village streets. From the presence of their beloved monarchs, they had drawn hope, courage, and the strength that fortifies. In a country as poor as Greece, the glamour and stature of the monarchy imparts beauty and color to many drab lives, the same as a splendid cathedral enriches the world of Latin American poems. If the wealth of the cathedral were melted down and distributed evenly among the poor, no one person would profit so much as a peso, and everyone would lose something of grace and excellence.

Aboard our floating motel, we changed for dinner. (Although I haven't the vaguest recollection of our quarters; apparently they were adequate because during those days, we regularly changed clothes and slept somewhere). Dinner began with caviar which for once outlasted my capacious appetite for sturgeon's eggs. As conversation rambled, I remember the Queen's expressing a predilection for Walt Whitman's poetry. When Sir Clifford recited verses of Noyes and Maserfield and confessed that while he found Emily Dickinson rather prim, he would have relished a flirtation with Edna St. Vincent Millay. One can hardly suppose that the pleasure would have been one-sided.

Someone began the game of asking, "If you had a choice, which one oall the figures in history would you choose to be?"

When the Queen promptly answered, "One of Alexander the Great's generals," the King seemed to think she could have stated a wiser reference.

He questioned, "Why one of Alexander's generals? Why not Alexander?"

Nevertheless I sympathized with Her Majesty's choice. Hadn't thgenerals outlived Alexander and inherited his empire?

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The next morning a modern train carried us to Olympia, the original site of the Olympic games. In its golden age, Olympia was renowned not only as a famous game-site but also as a political and religious center. Master Greek builders had raised there one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, the temple of the Olympian Zeus. Within the temple had stood Pheidias' masterpiece, the magnificent Zeus himself, sculptured in gold and ivory.

According to legend the first Olympiad was in 776 B.C. In that year, Pelops, namesake of the Peloponnesus, won the hand of his wife by defeating her father, Oenamaus, in a fatal chariot race. Although Pelops' victory was won by treacherous means, public sympathy was on his side. As a prospective father-in-law, Oenamaus was not promising material, for he had already disposed of thirteen previous suitors by "taking them for a ride," and, of course, the romantic Greeks had an opinion about that.

Every four years for a thousand years after the race of Pelops, the games attracted contestants and spectators from all parts of the Greek and, later, the Roman world. Even after Greece lost her independence, the Olympiads continued to give active expression to the Greek ideal of a strong body working in harmony with a strong mind. Excavations have revealed a votive temple dedicated by Philip of Macedon and traces of the house in which Nero resided during his visit to the games. Eventually, Christianity, earthquakes, and vandalism conspired to lay low the illustrious birthplace of the Greek ideal. At the close of the fourth century of our era, the Byzantine Emperor abolished the games, and finally the statue of mighty Olympian Zeus was carried to Constantinople to perish later in a disastrous fire.

Hints of past glory are still found today in fields of enormous fallen columns, many measuring six feet in diameter, and in the museum housing the excavated treasures of the vanished temples. The most famous piece of sculpture now in Olympia is Praxiteles' white marble Hermes who, although armless, is considered by many critics to be the most splendid Greek statue in the world. At the time of our visit, Hermes, prior to being elevated to a new pedestal, was so entangled in ropes and tackle that he looked very much like

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Laocoon struggling with the serpents. My husband crawled as close as the scaffolding permitted and zealously photographed Hermes while I photographed my husband's photographing Hermes.

Our leisurely picnic beneath the tall pine trees near the former stadium and hippodrome was a pastoral poem. The pervading peace of the glade contrasted sharply with yesterday's dramatic mountain spectacle. One soon fell under the spell of ancient Olympia whose charm had prevailed on men to cast aside their differences and weapons and join forces in a common contest. Yet today nothing wakes in Olympia except the hum of insects along the tall grasses and the chitchat of picnickers. One listens in vain for the shouts of the multitude and pounding of the racing hooves.

Our idyll ended on a painful note, for as we were returning to the cars at the end of the day, Lady Norton hopped from a low pedestal and freakishly turned her ankle. Her immediate distress was evident. She sat on the grass, pale and, for once, speechless as a marble statue. Her courage and Dr. Maiamos' first aid succeeded in transporting her to the Royal Yacht in the harbor at Patras. Never for an instant did she permit her physical agony to dampen her inviolate spirit or cloud our last evening aboard ship. British pluck, perseverance, persistence, pride (call it what you will — that special British determination to “see it through”) sustained her until the next afternoon when she returned to Athens for X-rays and prescribed treatment.

Greek-American Affairs or Scions of Pericles

At first sight, we fell irrevocably in love with Greece, and as the months passed, we lost our hearts to the buoyant romantic Greeks themselves. Buoyant? They are not merely buoyant, but history has proved them to be 100% unsinkable. And romantic? They may not appear to be romantic but romance is like a bird without a song. To believe this, one needs only to hearken to the impassioned strains of their plaintive popular songs, forever

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lamenting a lost or unrequited love. Happily our fervor for Greece was not unrequited, for Greeks, on the whole, reciprocated with a genuine affection for our homeland.

Many told us, "If after World War II a bridge had stretched from Greece to the United States, every last Greek would have walked across it."

Probably hundreds of thousands would have trudged that hard way to America. To the Greeks, we are not the imperialist bugbears that we seem to be in certain foreign quarters. For the most part, Greeks are informed about Americans. They have learned about us from their own private travels or from a close relative or neighbor, who has lived and traveled in the States. It is rare to meet a Greek who doesn't have a relative or some sort of connection in America.

For every Philhellene in America there are a hundred Americomaniacs in Greece. After World War I, many Greek soldiers, who had fought alongside of the American Expeditionary Forces, returned to Athens and organized the Greek-American Legion. Every year hundreds of thousands of dollars are sent in small checks from Greek Americans to their families in the homeland.

Once when we had lost our way in the Peloponnesus, we stopped the car to inquire directions of an ancient shepherd. With his flute and staff and beard, he was a twentieth century fugitive from Homer. Yet he had known America, and recognizing us to be Americans, he bleated out, "Me! Go Ameriki! San Frisco! Big fire! Come home Greece!" He had discovered America before my husband and I were born.

Some time later in Myrenia, a fishing village in Cyprus, before that island became the stage of strife and violence, I posed a timid question in frail Greek to the Cypriot desk clerk at the hotel. To my astonishment, he replied in sturdy English, explaining for my edification that the "C" on his sweater stood not for Cyprus but for Cornell University in Ithaca, New

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York, where he had studied hotel management. By that time, I was too abashed to ask whether, like his sweater, the Dome Hotel was also American plan.

My husband and I easily fell into the Greek pattern of outdoor living, for both of us had grown up in Southern communities where children were wont to spend the hot days and long evenings playing on the front lawns. Life in Greece is not circumscribed by air conditioning, central heating, and wall to wall carpeting. Life is lived under the sun and stars, in the streets and squares, in gardens and on beaches, in sidewalk cafes and seaside tavernas. Whenever possible, business and pleasure are conducted in the open air. The ancient dramas were written to be acted in the sky-shingled amphitheaters. The folk dances were meant to be danced on the hard earth of the villages. In Athens, one can still see the venerable olive tree under which Plato is said to have instructed his disciples. Each Sunday becomes a kind of gay outdoor festival with hawkers peddling varicolored balloons and popsicles to the holiday crowds swelling the streets and flowing through the parks.

We, too, were devoted to the cultures of the outdoors, but we believed the place for outdoors was out. We did not wish its fauna to live indoors with us. However, when we arrived at the Residence, the kitchen was the only screened room in the house. It was obvious that unless early measures were taken to gain ascendancy over the animal and insect kingdoms, our home would become a convention hall for alley cats and a superhighway for mosquitoes and flies. Having learned in South Carolina to respect the I.Q. of the insect world, my husband could see no advantage in screening two kitchen windows while the rest of the house stood hospitably open to the pesty outdoors. So he ordered screens for every window and door in the Residence.

Even after this salutary step was effected, to our bafflement the flies and mosquitoes were still as gregarious as ever. The insect kingdom seemed destined to inherit the American Residence in Athens, if the feline didn't beat them to it. One day, a particularly wily white cat, no doubt a status seeker, gave birth to five kittens in the Ambassador's

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linen cupboard. This nettled the Ambassador as much as if an expectant Greek mother, in a cunning effort to secure American citizenship for her unborn offspring, had suddenly brought forth the baby in the sacrosanct realm of the American Chancery.

Our home was becoming more and more like a Walt Disney cartoon. When accidentally, I discovered that each night our entire domestic staff removed the screens from their bedroom windows on the theory that screens, while excluding the insects and four-footed prowlers, also excluded the cool night breezes.

What could an ambassador's helpless wife do in the face of such subtle mutiny? If I nightly inspected every window screen, how could I assure the screens' staying in place after the inspection? Slowly, I began to understand the Greeks, through four hundred years of Turkish domination, had remained incorruptibly Greek, ultimately giving the slip to the Turks.

It was the same stubborn story with the brooms. Ever since an Achaean wife first swept the dirt floor around her primitive hearth, her Greek descendants had been sweeping with handleless brooms. At our residence, I flinched at this cleaning method until my sympathetic backaches drove me to order a dozen brand-new beautiful brooms, U.S.A. models with long practical handles. When the brooms finally arrived from the mail-order house, they were straightway distributed to the sweeping staff who indulgently thanked me for my magnanimity. I couldn't have felt more self-satisfied if I had invented the wheel. However, my private industrial revolution was short-lived. When I saw those brooms in use the next day, every handle had been decapitated.

In a determined effort to be philosophical, I concluded, "The Greeks are a people that prefer to keep their noses close to the grindstone." Several years after we had left for Greece, a friend in Bangkok said, "I suppose Greeks, as a nation, necessarily suffer from an inferiority complex when they compare their present day plight with their glorious past."

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"Inferiority complex?" I exclaimed. "In a country where there are a dozen political parties and each petty official is scrambling to become the next Prime Minister? Inferiority, indeed! They don't know the meaning of the word. In fact, George, each Greek thinks of himself as the direct descendant of Pericles, and in most cases I will agree with him."

Island Odyssey

Before we had even learned the road from the Chancery to the Residence, Greek friends began inquiring, "Have you visited the islands? Ah! Tsk! Tsk! You must visit the islands. You will love them, all of them."

It seemed hardly possible for an ambassador to find time to visit all of the islands, but obviously until he had seen the principal ones, he hadn't seen Greece. So, in Holy Week, we accepted with alacrity the invitation of the Prime Minister, Mr. Sophocles Venizelos, to five days' Easter cruise of the Dodecanese Islands. The Dodecanese form one of the largest constellations in the galaxy of islands encircling the Greek mainland. Dodecanese derives from the Greek word dodeca, meaning twelve, but there are actually thirteen or fourteen island satellites in the group. From the sea and from the sky, the islands appear to be as alike as the stars twinkling in the Milky Way, but in reality they are as individually different as the separate stars themselves must be. While sharing physical similarities and a great national tradition, each island has its own local customs, special craft, and typical costume.

Having belonged to Turkey for four hundred years, the Dodecanese were won by Italy in 1912 at the end of the Turko-Italian war. Italy governed them until 1947 when they were ceded to Greece. Although the architecture of some of the public buildings is remindful of their Italian period, their population and culture are impressively Greek.

One could scarcely hope to see these islands at a happier time than Easter or under better auspices than the Prime Minister's. On our voyage to the outer limits of the Greek solar

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system, we sailed aboard H.M.S. Mioulis at midnight on April 25. The sailing hour did not surprise us, for Greeks are known to prefer nocturnal to diurnal activity. They are addicted to midnight swims, dances, church services, and late parliaments. Our ship, a destroyer in the Royal Greek Navy, was named in honor of one of history's great naval heroes, Admiral Mioulis. In a remarkable sea engagement during the Greek Revolution, Mioulis dispersed the numerically superior Turkish and Egyptian fleets.

The passenger list of H.M.S. Mioulis included, besides the Prime Minister and us, two other American couples, General and Mrs. Leigh Wade and Mr. and Mrs. B. O'Neal Bryan, and apparently every member of Mr. Venizelos' so-called Liberal Party. At least every time I climbed the ladder two decks to the bath, which was perpetually engaged, I encountered a new civilian face or pair of feet, depending on whether my destination was to or fro. On that ladder, I so frequently changed direction in mid-course that my husband observed, "John Hay was right. Diplomats, women, and crabs are three creatures who appear to be coming when they are going and vice versa."

Our island hopping Odyssey commenced the next morning when the Mioulis called at Patmos, a gem of an island in a turquoise sea. With its steep stark rock rising abruptly from the Aegean and its whitewashed village hugging the harbor and creeping up the hillside, the island appeared to float on the sea like a crude primitive crown with one brilliant jewel, the gleaming Byzantine monastery, sparkling from the summit. In Roman times Patmos was the Alcatraz to which Jews, Christians, and enemies of the Empire were banished. During the reign of the fanatical Emperor Domitian, A.D. 95, St. John the Divine was sentenced to Patmos "on account of the word of God and testimony of Jesus." (Revelations 1:9). There, he is believed to have received the mighty vision of the Apocalypse, and if one is predestined to have a mighty vision, he could hardly find a likelier place to have it.

After landing, we climbed on the backs of tiny donkeys on the village and made the laborious ascent to the monastery. Anyone who disputes that the donkey is the world's

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most sure-footed beast has never ridden a donkey, sidesaddle, up the perilous grade of Patmos.

After a religious service in the chapel, we visited the monastery's impressive library and examined a portion of its priceless collection of rare early Christian manuscripts.

Then, we descended midway to a village square to observe the ceremonial foot washing pageant. In Patmos, every year on Maundy Thursday, Greeks in ancient Byzantine costumes enact the biblical drama of Christ's washing the feet of the apostles. Although not a word of the dialogue was intelligible to us Americans from Athens, all of us were deeply affected by the solemnity and sincerity of the actors.

To return to the ship, we forsook our donkeys for an antiquated brakeless touring car. Its driver was bent on impressing Americans with Greek derring-do, and at breakneck speed he clattered downhill with no hands as well as no brakes. The law of gravity was bound to deliver us to the ship, but the state of delivery was unthinkable. How we pined for those steady little donkeys!

At our next port of call, Leros, we witnessed quite another sort of drama. On this island, King Paul had established a rehabilitation center for bandit youths. At the end of the guerrilla warfare, the Greek army had on its hands 1500 military prisoners under eighteen years old. These war-trained youths, who had fought side by side with the Communists, gave scant promise of ever becoming solid Greek citizens. Obviously, they could not be turned loose on the country which they had so recently despoiled, and yet prison hardly seemed the proper internment center for lads under eighteen years old. So the King, assuming personal responsibility for the young outlaws, sent them to a special school at Leros where they might learn a trade and study the Christian virtues. The gratifying results of this bold venture have more than justified the King's faith in the youth of Greece, and the original investment has paid inestimable dividends to the national welfare. When we

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waved farewell to Leros, I was the proud possessor of an ingenious kitchen match-holder which one of the boys had created from an old tin can.

Our Odyssey took us next to the island of Kalymnos where we were to spend the night ashore. Kalymnos is a world sponge center. Its economy is founded on the sponging industry, and its natives sail their small caiques over the Mediterranean as far as the coast of Africa in quest of the skeletal remains which are their stock-in-trade.

As we approached, scores of small fishing and sponging craft greeted us several miles outside the harbor. Dangerously close and with every whistle tooting, the little fleet dizzily spun round and round the Mioulis. As though the din were not sufficiently dinning, the Mioulis returned blast for blast. My husband, when he recovered from the first shock of the noise, was thrilled to see American, as well as Greek, flags on every little boat. Whether Old Glory was a homespun pennant flying from a mast or a freshly painted emblem on a battered hull, the sight swelled our hearts with pride and love.

With the thunder of a major sea battle having announced our approach, we scarcely expected to catch Kalymnos napping, and we didn't. Before the Mioulis was even within sight, everyone had heard us coming, and all of them were at the dock to meet us.

By that time, we were travelers well seasoned to the patterned routine which the Prime Ministers' visits invariably evoked. Church bells and ships' whistles noisily competed as we sailed into the beautiful natural harbor. When the Prime Minister and his guests stepped ashore, young pretty girls in gay peasant costumes presented the visiting ladies with so many bouquets we could barely peep over the top of the flowers. When we walked up the lane between columns of soldiers at attention, more pretty girls, who, instead of giving us their flowers to carry, discreetly strewed the petals over the cobblestone pavement. Proceeding to the principal village square, we entered the government building where the Prime Minister, the mayor, and my husband made speeches - often from the same balconies from which Mussolini had projected his famous chin).

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At this point, the pattern at Kalymnos deviated. Instead of scrambling on donkeys for the long haul to a loft monastery, we were escorted to the home of the world's sponge queen who hospitably gave us lodging for the night. For generations her family had captained the sponge industry, just as for centuries the natives of Kalymnos had lived by diving for sponges. She was seventy-five years old, spoke faultless English, and possessed, no one could say exactly how many, millions of dollars. (So far there hasn't been time for me to compute all that wealth in drachmas.) "Sponging" relatives from all over the world had returned to Kalymnos to spend Easter with her. We suspected that some of the visitors were unhappily displaced by our arrival because our hostess' house, though comfortable, was by no means enormous.

With pride, she told us that the island's sponging fleet had been prepared to sail to Africa that very day but had postponed its voyage in order to extend a hearty welcome to the Prime Minister. We assured her that the fleet had dramatically accomplished its purpose in that respect.

On Good Friday, we anchored off Cos and sailed to shore in small motor launches. Overlooking the harbor was a medieval fortress, an anachronistic sentinel built by the Knights of Rhodes.

In ancient times, Greeks from the mainland and other islands went to Cos to benefit from the curative and prophylactic properties of its mineral springs. Quite naturally the island developed into a health-spa resort and became one of the beauty spots of antiquity. A visitor can still see the excavated ruins of an extensive temple to Asclepiades, the Greek god of healing, and a well preserved amphitheater constructed for the diversion of the patients and pilgrims.

Hippocrates, the father of medicine, was born at Cos in 46 B.C. Islanders pointed out to us the plane tree under which Hippocrates lectured his students and treated his patients. It

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had a tremendous girth of thirty feet and was the roundest tree we had ever encountered outside the Sequoia National Park in California.

I was not at all astounded to be informed that Cos was the cradle of medicine, as well as the birthplace of medicine's sire, for the Hellenes had been a fertile race who diligently littered their country with cribs, cradles, and birthplaces. Every place-name had been forged into a cradle of sorts, and though the prolific Greek hands that rocked those numerous cradles found little time to rule the world, their cradles are rocking yet, and with ever greater momentum.

That evening, in observance of Good Friday, the island was immersed in almost total darkness. By the light of a few flickering candles we felt our way to church to attend the awe-inspiring Good Friday ceremony. As a part of the service the sacred shroud, representing the coffin of Jesus Christ, was borne from the church to the still street. The grave congregation, holding lighted tapers, silently filed out and followed the holy shroud in solemn funeral procession through the village. Like an oozing stream of fire, the candlelight cortege slowly flowed across the island and into the night.

Easter Island in the Hellenes

The next morning when we awakened off Rhodes, the Island of the Roses, we knew we had died and gone to heaven. From all appearances, the Italians had succeeded in their endeavor to make Rhodes the island paradise of the Eastern Mediterranean.

As a part of a construction program that spared neither effort nor expense, the Italians, in their day, had interlaced the island with a network of good modern roads and erected a number of splendid buildings, including an exquisite copy in miniature of the Doge's palace. Near the beach and next to a Moslem cemetery, they had raised a palatial resort-hotel, framed in mountains of bougainvillea. On the grounds were tennis courts and beach and bathing facilities. Inside were game rooms, ballrooms, and, opening on the Aegean, a magnificent dining room with a luscious view to delight even the most finicky gourmet.

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Beyond the portals was spread the sea with large cruise ships and small caiques under sail, and beyond the sea lay the blue coast of Turkey in Asia.

In the medieval walled section of town, the Italians had exercised discreet judgment and their customary good taste in the restoration of the Knights' Palace of the Grand Masters and other impaired buildings of the Middle Ages. The restored Palace, intended as a summer residence for the King of Italy, is an extravagant combination of medieval architecture and twentieth century plumbing.

Generally speaking, the Greeks took a dim view of Italian measures to preserve and improve Rhodes. They believed the Italians, in an attempt to create a pretentious showplace, had violated the islands' natural charms and corrupted her simple character. Just as disgraced parents look askance at the beautiful daughter who has sullied the family name by a prolonged illicit liaison, so the Greeks looked on Rhodes. In short, the island was tainted by association, and though she had returned at last to the family hearth, the past was not yet forgiven.

If we waxed ecstatic, Greek friends would check us with "Wait until you see Mykonos. Ah! Mykonos! She is a truly Greek island - so genuine in character."

We were willing to be open-minded about Mykonos, but we refused to be Italianated from Rhodes, tarnished and counterfeit though she be. Our first impression never palling, Rhodes became our Easter Island, our favorite holiday retreat to which we repaired at every opportunity and by every possible conveyance. On one voyage in a small Navy crash boat my husband tossed for fifteen hours in a rough sea. Even that, he insisted, was worth the pain, but he never went to Rhodes by crash boat a second time.

Wishing others at the Embassy and E.C.A. Mission to benefit from the therapeutic Rhodian charms, my husband recommended that the mission schedule weekly flights to transport

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overworked American personnel on badly needed furloughs, and on his private visits he always crowded the maximum number of good friends into the boat or plane.

The island itself is a historical library, preserving in its archeological archives, the illustrated history of the Mediterranean world. There is not one dull page among the volumes of source material that recount man's aspirations, fortunes, and misfortunes from prehistoric times to the present day. From the library's catalogue, the student can select the original manuscript that most concerns his special interest. The prehistoric period is recorded in the archeological remains of the Late Minoan Age. Testifying to the brilliance of the archaic, classical, and Hellenistic periods are various acropolises, architectural fragments, and statues.

It seems more than coincidental that three of the seven wonders of antiquity rose in this region within one hundred and twenty five miles of each other. In the third century B.C., a traveler could in the course of a journey from Rhodes to Ephesus visit all three, the great Colossus of Rhodes, the tomb of King Mausolus at Halicarnassus, and the temple of Artemis at Ephesus. Some years after the death of Alexander the Great, the Rhodians erected the colossal copper statue to the glory of Apollo, the sun god. Rising to a height of one hundred and five feet in the sky, it stood at Rhodes for fifty-six years until 224 B.C. when, like Olympia, it was prostrated by an earthquake. However, the Colossus fell even lower than Olympia, for in A.D. 656 the Saracens sold the remains to a metal dealer who used nine hundred camels to transport the copper fragments permanently from man's ken and knowledge.

At Lindos, one of the oldest continuously settled villages, the biblical student can climb to the majestic acropolis and look down on the small verdigris harbor into which St. Paul settled in the course of his missionary travels.

For the student of medieval history, Rhodes is an open source book with footnotes on every other page. The medieval quarter is remarkably intact. The walls and towers

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guarding the harbor, the moated castle, the hospital, the picturesque Street of the Knights, all are today almost exactly as they were during the two hundred years that the Knights of St. John controlled the island.

When Suleiman the Magnificent defeated the Knights in 1522, they evacuated, and Rhodes fell to the power and influence of Turkey.

By no means are history and archeology the island's only, or even its principal attractions. There are spacious parks with cultivated gardens and natural woods profuse with wild flowers and towering trees. In a shady glen beside a flowing stream is the Valley of the Butterflies where literally thousands of butterflies flutter each summer. In this valley, sun glasses are unnecessary because dark clouds of palpitating wings obscure the daylight filtering through the tree tops.

To tantalize the shopper are textile shops, jewelry shops with displays of typical Rhodian jewelry, the modern Turkish market on the island's broadest boulevard, and, above all, the pottery factories. In ancient times, Rhodian pottery, influenced by Persian design, was famous throughout the Mediterranean. Today, pottery making is again a major industry, and many of the early designs are reproduced in the modern factories which stand not only for excellent quality and craftsmanship but also stand solidly behind their shipments to foreign parts.

In one of the pottery factories, my mother was inspired to order eight fragile reindeer to lead Santa's sleigh across her Christmas table in Tulsa, Oklahoma. The reindeer reached Tulsa, but en route Dasher, Prancer, Dancer, and Comet had lost their splendid antlers. Although the time was short, the factory at Rhodes set a second shipment that arrived unimpaired in time for Christmas in Tulsa.

Rhodes is English bicycle heaven, where all good old English bicycles with hand brakes eventually go to enjoy the bliss of eternal senescence among their own kind. Everyone in Rhodes is a pedal-pusher because the bicycle is practical not only for coasting down

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the steep hills but also for climbing them. When one is pressing up a sharp incline, it is comforting to have a bicycle to cling to and lean on for moral support. I always preferred falling on a bicycle to falling on my face.

We had expected Easter in Rhodes to be a joyous emotional experience, and we were not disappointed. Everywhere in Greece, Easter is the gayest, merriest day in the year. While Christmas, Christ's birthday, is chiefly a religious fete, Easter assumes the dimensions of a great national holiday, or rather a national holiday season. It is the time when the Orthodox church celebrates the Resurrection, the miracle on which the Christian faith is predicated.

About eleven-thirty on Easter Eve we set forth on foot from the hotel to attend midnight mass. Because at that hour Christ had not yet risen from the dead, the street lights were draped with crepe, and the crowded church was totally dark except for a dim light on the icon-wall. The chanting, always glorious, was on that holy night an oratorio wafted straight from heaven. The congregation, holding long unlighted tapers, stood in the darkened church until a few minutes before midnight when the Archbishop, bearing a lighted candelabrum, silently swept through an aperture in the foreground. As he moved slowly down the center aisle, the nearest worshipers lighted their candles from the candelabrum and passed the flame to their neighbors, who in turn did the same until the church glowed with candles lighted directly or indirectly from the sacred candelabrum. The throng followed the Archbishop outside the church to a flower bedecked pavilion representing the Holy Sepulchre. Thousands of devout Orthodox pressed around the foundation, but by virtue of being with the Prime Minister, we were invited to ascend the steps where the priests read the age old Byzantine liturgy. At midnight, the solemn service reached its climax with the Archbishop's thrilling pronouncement, "Christ Is Risen."

At this given signal, the silent orderly congregation went wild with joy. Simultaneously, ships in the harbor fired cannons, churches clanged bells, and the military struck up the bands. The competing noises rocked the island. Fireworks and rockets shrieked through the skies. I couldn't help thinking that if Americans were to celebrate New Year's Eve in

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church instead of in Time's Square, they'd celebrate with a ceremony as boisterous as a Greek Easter.

After church, we went to the Governor General's Residence for a breakfast which was literally a break-fast for the pious Greeks. Beginning with the traditional Easter egg-and-lemon soup, guaranteed to condition a fasting stomach for the shock treatment, they steadfastly broke fast through five courses that included lobster, chicken, lamb, dessert, fruit, and nuts.

On the drive back to the hotel at 2:30 A.M., we saw a few stragglers walking home, shielding their flickering candles with their cupped hands. Mrs. Venizelos, the Prime Minister's wife, explained, "It is very important to return home with one's candle still burning. If the flame should die, it can be relighted only from another candle that has been originally ignited by the Archbishop's candelabrum."

The next morning the breakfast trays were laden with gifts of red-dyed Easter eggs to remind us that "Christ Is Risen." For a month after Easter, Greek would address Greek with "Christ Is Risen." Displacing the customary "good morning," it was the proper seasonal greeting, for which the polite rejoinder was "Christ Is Risen Indeed."

Kansas Comes to Greece

At 2:00 A.M. on Thanksgiving morning, I was at the Ellenikon airport to welcome with wide open arms two visitors from Kansas, my Aunt Pauline and her young niece, Dodie. At that hour, it wasn't necessary to spread the red carpet. The mere fact of my personal predawn appearance at the airport proclaimed the magnitude of the welcome. For several autumn months Aunt Pauline and Dodie had been "doing Europe" without any apparent intention of "doing Greece." We had sent them a standing invitation to visit us at any time, but with a thought to Dodie's social entertainment, we had privately hoped their visit would coincide with that of the Sixth Fleet. However, with transparent malice of forethought, Aunt

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Pauline had delayed their arrival until the Fleet's withdrawal from Athens. At last, they were coming, and I was as elated as anyone could possibly be at 2:00 A.M.

Aunt Pauline brought with her the fag end of a wracking bronchial cold, and Dodie brought the wide-eyed curiosity of the late teens. After a fast nap at the Residence, Dodie was ready to start the official celebration of Thanksgiving by driving us to Pierce College for the church services and the reading of President Truman's Proclamation.

At one o'clock, twelve other guests besides the Kansas relatives came to dinner at the Residence, and a more heterogeneous group of odd bodkins never gathered around the same table. The company was principally a collection of single Americans, including my husband's secretary, my secretary, and Anne Darlington, my husband's Philhellene cousin from Washington, D.C. After coffee the drawing room curtains were drawn for the movie, "I Was A Male Order Bride," which proved to be really perfect after-dinner entertainment. There were enough laughs to amuse those who chose to remain awake, yet not enough laughs to keep awake those who preferred to fall asleep. Altogether it was a most satisfactory Thanksgiving, and that evening Aunt Pauline wasn't the only one ready and eager to fall into bed at nine o'clock.

Although the Kansans pursued a rather heady program in Greece, above everything else it was "the wonderfully soft" air that most excited Aunt Pauline. Constantly commenting on its balmy texture, she inhaled it in draughts. I was so impressed that for at least a week I was light-headed from experimenting in deep breathing exercises.

Dodie took a romantic interest in everything she did and saw. An appointment to have her seams adjusted by the "little dressmaker" became an exciting escapade. Exploring the Acropolis by moonlight was an experience she vowed "to remember always." And on the day of her audience with Queen Frederica, she would willingly have died for Greece and Queen.

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One sunny morning Aunt Pauline, Dodie, and I set forth on an overnight's excursion to Nauplia, a coastal town in the Peloponnesus. The three of us squeezed into the back seat of the Chevrolet while Panos, my husband's steadfast chauffeur, and Mr. Kondelis, my equally steadfast bodyguard, and the picnic basket occupied the front seat.

For once the situation was reversed, and I was able to observe the back of Mr. Kondelis' neck instead of his observing mine. His presence always reminded me of that boutonniere plucked from the bouquet of Robert Louis Stevenson:

I have a little shadow
That goes in and out with me,
And what can be the use of him
Is more than I can see.

It was never clear to me whether the Greeks had assigned Mr. Kondelis to protect me or to keep me under surveillance. My husband told me not to be petty. He thought that if it made the Greeks happy to keep me out of trouble, I should be grateful for their concern. One thing was certain: Mr. Kondelis forever frustrated my chances of ever becoming an international incident in Greece. I shouldn't have objected so much if I could have penetrated the communications barrier, but he professed to speak not a word of English, and although he conversed fluently in Greek with other Greeks, my Greek was absolutely indecipherable to him. So for several years we passed every day in each other's company without becoming speaking acquaintances.

On the road to Nauplia, our car veered a few miles so that we could visit Mycenae and Tiryns, two of the oldest ruins in Greece. Aunt Pauline, a passionate sightseer so long as the sights were visible from the back seat of the automobile, remained in the car with Panos while Dodie, Mr. Kondelis, and I walked through the Lion Gate at Mycenae and inspected the once illustrious citadel of Agamemnon. Without a guide the ruins were beyond our mental reconstruction, but they were nevertheless impressive. We wondered how Agamemnon could have forsaken so glorious a place in order to retrieve a wayward sister-in-law.

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Among the Cyclopean remains of Tiryns, we immediately espied a choicpicnic area.

After lunch, our route continued in the direction of Epidaurus, the most perfectly preserved amphitheater in Greece. Aunt Pauline wished especially to see Epidaurus, not only because amphitheaters are usually large enough to be viewed from a car but also because Epidaurus was the famous site of modern summer theatricals and music festivals.

Passing an elderly peasant woman mounted sideways on a donkey, Panostopped the car to ask, "Please, mam, how far to Epidaurus?"

"About two cigarettes," she mused aloud.

To this non sequitur Panos replied, "Thank you, mam," and resumespeed.

I had gleaned just enough from the subtle verbal exchange to ask, "Panos, what on earth did she mean? How can Epidaurus be two cigarettes away?"

He took pains to elucidate, "She says, mam, that we will arrive aEpidaurus in the length of time it takes to smoke two cigarettes."

Evidently the Peloponnesians measured space not by linear distance but by time, the time required to smoke a cigarette. Always varying with the mode of travel, distance in the Peloponnesus was never absolute. If we were "two cigarettes away" by car, the old peasant was surely "a half package away" by donkey. How Einstein would have appreciated such relative reckoning of time and space!

Two cigarettes later we passed through a grove of trees and stopped before the Theatre of Epidaurus cut in the side of a mountain. Its architect, Polycleitus the Younger, had scientifically oriented the theatre in such a way that the afternoon sun was always behind most of the fourteen thousand spectators. To prove its reputation for being the most acoustically perfect theatre ever built by ancient Greeks, we applied the acid test. Dodie

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and I, with a baffled Mr. Kondelis in tow, climbed the fifty-five limestone tiers to the top. Then Aunt Pauline, below in the orchestra pit, slowly tore a sheet of paper into halves. The riving sound was just as clear (and just as riving) as if Dodie standing beside me had torn the paper. Next, augmenting Mr. Kondelis' mystification, Aunt Pauline recited in a low conversational tone a monologue which Dodie and I identified as the Gettysburg Address or a recognizable imitation thereof. With flying colors Epidaurus had passed the acoustical test.

On that peaceful afternoon, the amphitheater, sleeping in a remote corner of the Peloponnesus, seemed a forgotten relic of the fourth century B.C., but when I saw it again six months later, it was a lively Mecca for twentieth century music lovers. By land and sea, ten thousand Greeks had journeyed from Athens and the provinces to hear Klemperer conduct the Vienna Symphony Orchestra in a series of outdoor concerts at Epidaurus. Man had never conceived a more splendid setting for splendid music. At the first notes of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony a full moon rose over the trees to the cloudless Greek sky - cloudless until the beginning of the Symphony's third movement. Then the deluge fell, sending four score musicians and ten thousand agile spectators scampering like deer to the shelter of the parked automobiles. One doubts that Beethoven ever ended on a wetter note.

However, on that afternoon in December, Epidaurus was our private stage under a most pacific sky. Leaving there, we drove to Nauplia, a picturesque port on the Gulf of Argos and, in the early years after the Revolution, former capital of Greece. Dominating Nauplia is the lofty Palamidi crag, crowned with an antiquated fortress which has belonged successively to the Byzantines, Franks, and Venetians. Dodie challenged me to climb the nine hundred and ninety-nine steps to the Palamidi's summit just to see if Mr. Kondelis would follow in hot pursuit, but it seemed to me that ill-used man had already earned his day's salary.

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Panos drove us to the dock where Aunt Pauline, Dodie, and I hastily embarked in a small motor launch for Bourtzi where the three of us had reservations to spend the night. That was the one time Mr. Kondelis missed the boat. Dodie and I took puerile pleasure in his shocked surprise as he watched his naughty charges sail from his grasp. Momentarily, he seemed on the verge of swimming after us, but he refrained with dignity, and until dark we could discern his lonely figure, like a forlorn castaway on a foreign shore, brooding on the dock at Nauplia. We never knew whether he maintained a night long vigil or eventually abandoned the watch and relaxed in town.

Bourtzi, a miniature island of solid rock about a third of a mile from shore, is the site of an old Venetian fortress that has been more or less converted to a hotel - more fortress and less hotel. The Venetians had taken literally the New Testament injunction to "build thine house upon a rock," for the fort, like a snug toupee, literally caps the rock. The sea presses on all sides. A gentle surf, lapping the rock foundation of the fort, gives one a very real sensation of being aboard ship. Bourtzi is no fit place for seasickly tourists to be stranded without their Dramamine.

After exploring the medieval parapets and battlements, we posed for Aunt Pauline under fountains of bougainvillea. Then we entered the empty dining room. When the comely waitress brought the plates of steaming soup to the table, Aunt Pauline, a disciple of Cordon Bleu, was transported by the savory aroma.

"Europeans are so clever at making delicious soups from practically nothing. They take a bit of vermicelli, a handful of vegetables, a little broth - and this is the delectable result." Having thus blessed the first course, she closed her eyes and delicately sipped. At once her spoon dropped so indelicately to the plate that I feared she had burned her tongue.

"Girls," she hissed in a stage whisper, "you can't drink the soup. It's pure mutton fat."

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"But, Aunt Pauline," I gasped, fearful that the waitress might return from the kitchen, "The cook will be insulted. Dodie and you needn't touch it, but I must."

"Perhaps the Ambassador's wife has certain obligations, but I am merely the Ambassador's aunt." In a flash, with soup plate in hand, she crossed the room and tossed the aromatic contents through the open window to the sea below. Luckily she had kept a firm grip on the plate. Then she dashed back to her place at the table and hurriedly spooned some of Dodie's and my soup into her empty dish.

"Now we have obviously done our duty by the soup. Everyone should be pleased, especially the sharks. And we haven't disgraced Jack."

When the waitress reentered the dining room, Aunt Pauline diplomatically said, "The soup is delicious, but we must save a little appetite for the fish."

After dinner, there was nothing to distract us from retiring to the cold clean comfort of our erstwhile dungeon rooms.

The next morning, a ragged barefoot boatman rowed us across the spangled gulf towards the dock where we beheld faithful Mr. Kondelis manning the battle station. On the way to shore we pointed curiously in the direction of loud spirited singing on the mainland. Our barefoot Charon grunted, "Communistas," and expressively spit in the sea. Afterwards, we learned that Nauplia was a prison site for Communist guerrillas.

A month later Aunt Pauline wrote effusively from Kansas. She outeulogized even Dodie. It was quite apparent that her overnight's stay at Bourtzi had been the unique experience of her entire European tour. She had forgotten neither the lush bougainvillea nor the pure linen sheets at the hotel, and the sunrise over the Gulf of Argos still shone in her memory. I dared to suppose that from the distance of Kansas, even the soup tasted good.

Golden Jubilee

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The great event in the winter of 1951 was King Paul's fiftieth birthday. All day Friday we celebrated, and all day Saturday we nursed our aching heads and weary feet. Birthday festivities began for us at 10:30 A.M. Friday with a Te Deum mass at the Metropolis. It was customary for the diplomatic corps to observe the Greek national days and important religious occasions by attending a Te Deum service, and the King's birthday was certainly an occasion of special religious and national significance for the Greeks.

Attendance at Te Deum required full dress uniform. Since the administration of President Pierce, when William L. Marcy was Secretary of State, the official American diplomatic uniform in all countries and climates had been the unimaginative and unvarying white tie and tails. My husband would gladly have sacrificed glamour to comfort, but the American formal apparel offered neither advantage.

At eight o'clock in the morning, he considered the boiled starched shirt to be an anachronism of the Victorian Age, but when the sun rose higher and the temperature rose accordingly, it became a torture chamber of the Middle Ages. He always hoped that some enterprising careerist would render a real service to the Foreign Service by designing a more suitable costume for American diplomats to wear in tropical climates. The military services sensibly shift from winter "dress" to summer "dress," according to the season, but the diplomatic service is uniformly uniformed.

On Te Deum mornings, my chief consolation was that I was not Mrs. Lapham. If anyone decried the boiled shirt more than my husband, it was Roger Lapham.

At last properly accoutered for church, we greeted the group of attaches and wives who had mustered for coffee downstairs and set forth with them in a caravan of cars, each flying an American flag on the front right fender. Along the thoroughfare leading to the Cathedral a cordon of soldiers stood at attention as the official cars passed by. If from behind the soldiers an enthusiastic spectator cheered, "Zito, Ameriki," my husband would

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mutter, "Probably one of the Greek employees from the Embassy." Even so, the spontaneous acclaim made our American blood tingle with pride.

The assembly inside the church was a colorful sight, the diplomats arrayed in their traditional full dress attire and the diplomats trying their feminine best to match the elegance of their husbands. However, the men captured all prizes. The male of the species outglittered the other males. Resplendent in cardinal red formal coat, encrusted with medals and swaddled in gold braid, the dazzling Dane loomed like a gaudy saurian envoy from a glorious Jurassic kingdom.

The diplomatic corps jockeyed for elbow room in the left transept and stood facing the government officials assembled in the right transept. The great nave was reserved for military and Palace personages, and the gallery, commanding a panoramic view of the whole vivid spectacle, accommodated the few invited guests. Because Orthodox churches have neither pews nor chairs, the entire congregation, except the lucky spectators in the gallery, stood throughout the ceremony, but with so much beauty to behold and hear, time never lagged.

At the stroke of the half hour the Royal Family, followed by high ranking Palace officials and the ladies-in-waiting, solemnly entered the narthex door and moved down a middle aisle to positions upstage center. The Metropolitan began reading the Orthodox liturgy. The invisible choir, intoning in minor key the sacred Byzantine hymns, sounded like the celestial chorus of angels. I was transfixed by the sublimity.

Then suddenly, I was aware that the Metropolitan had finished the Mass and that Their Majesties, having nodded to the diplomats and government officials, had turned to leave. In shattering contrast to the sober dignity of the service, the military officers filling the great nave burst into most nonecclesiastical and boisterous cheers. "Zito Paul! Zito, Frederica!" echoed from the lordly dome of the pulsating Metropolis.

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The Royal Family then returned to the Palace to receive the personal congratulations and good wishes of official Athens. As soon as we extricated ourselves from a first class traffic tangle, we followed suit.

'Twixt Cathedral and Palace, there was no time to dash home to change a torn stocking. So we drove direct to the Palace where liveried aides escorted us to a special waiting room and filed us according to rank. Finally, America's turn came. Someone boomed, "The Ambassador of the United States."

That was our cue to appear in the doorway of the tremendous receiving room. Painfully conscious of the run in my stocking and praying that my high heels wouldn't throw me, I dropped a schoolgirl curtsy on the threshold and with forced dignity paced the length of the polished floor. Curtsying twice again to the King and Queen, I uttered a sincere "Chronia pola" and retreated without incident. Fortunately my husband had advised me to leave my wrap in the car, and so spared the scramble in the check room, we were soon on our way home to late lunch, comfortable shoes, and a new stocking.

One of our visiting Congressmen asked me how often the King celebrated his fiftieth birthday. It was futile to explain to the skeptical American that the King's birth date was a well documented fact in Greek history and not subject to royal vagary.

That evening's birthday ball was story book beautiful, a real Cinderella ball with all the men well turned out in formal evening clothes and all the ladies (except the American Ambassador's wife) ravishing in fairy godmother creations. However, a full dress tragedy occurred when four guests, including the Queen's sister-in-law from Hanover, appeared in identical Dior gowns, black and white bouffant. From that moment the other female guests had plenty of food for small talk, each lady speculating on which of the four gowns had been the original model.

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My husband could not understand the fussy concern over four black and white dresses. "After all," he observed, "there are hundreds of men here dressed precisely as I am, and no one is disturbed by that."

Two alternating orchestras gave the guests no breathing spell between dances. When the Brazilian orchestra, which concentrated on sambas and tangos, took an overdue intermission, the second orchestra played Viennese waltzes from the balcony. The dancing couples, spinning to the silvery strains of Strauss, turned the ballroom into one bright carousel.

In the first half of the evening, it seemed that five hundred more sedate guests had never assembled for a ball. However, after a delicious champagne supper served at midnight, the spirited Greeks broke into the "raspa" and a series of uninhibited folk dances that continued until 2:30 A.M. Then both orchestras simultaneously struck up the Greek national anthem, and the King's golden anniversary officially ended.

Distaff Diplomacy

Athenians seemed constantly surprised by my husband's youth, and in the beginning many asked me, "Isn't your husband young to be an ambassador at the age of forty-three?"

With the force of conviction I always answered, "Fortunately he is young, for only a youngish man could match the pace."

Foreign service members frequently recount the old story about the reporter and Mr. Dawes. When the latter was Ambassador to the court of St. James, a reporter asked him if it were true that being an ambassador was harder on the feet than on the head. Mr. Dawes allegedly answered, "It all depends on which end the ambassador uses the most," but I should have told the impertinent young man that although a strong head and sturdy feet

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are useful auxiliaries, a really successful ambassadorship is predicated on a compliant stomach, cast-iron preferred.

However, it is reasonable to add that if the ambassador comes equipped with wife, she does a great deal of the foot work while he does all the head work. Whenever the United States sends a married official overseas, Uncle Sam gets two servants for the price of one. Any overseas wife will confirm this.

Early in the game, we discovered it was physically and chronologically impossible for the American Ambassador to see everyone who wished to see him or to show his teeth at every important function. After all, there were eight million Greeks and only one American Ambassador. So we decided to divide our labors and work split shifts. For a while, it befell my happy lot to represent the Ambassador at the ballets, concerts, and cocktail parties while he devoted his time to this job, implementing American foreign policy and promoting American interests in Greece. In the line of duty, I listened to Greece's own Gina Bachauer when she was guest pianist at the Sunday morning symphony concerts, and I sat in the moonlight on a hard marble tier to hear Kalomiris' opera, "Il Protomastro", sung in the Odeum of Herode Atticus. I heard Puccini's and Verdi's operas sung in Greek, and I attended the Greek production of "Mr. Roberts" which seemed so amusing to the Athenians and was just plain Greek to me.

If the Greeks were disappointed to have me for a consolation prize, they never gave me time to suspect their chagrin. They firmly believed that the right word in the right ear could achieve wonders, and a long line of hopeful aspirants beat a path to the Embassy Residence to incant the right word in my right ear. There were writers and musicians wishing to have their books and music published in the United States; pianists who played for me in hopes that I might be moved to arrange American concert tours for them; adolescent orphans pleading to be adopted by American foster parents before they reached the age for Greek military service; painters wishing to auction their paintings at a social benefit in our house; refugee neighbors urging me to have our economic

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mission build better homes for them to live in; a hospital board requesting that I entreat the Prime Minister to eject the wounded military from their civilian hospital, and tactfully admonishing me that the right word in the right ear could work miracles; and a delegation of Greek W.C.T.U.s, beseeching a personal message which they could take from me to the International W.C.T.U convention in Canada. It was my duty to try to be diplomatic, but I didn't have to be hypocritical. When I told the W.C.T.U.s I had never seen an intoxicated Greek, they enlightened me with the brutal announcement that most Greek children drank wine with their meals (Cochinelli, I hoped). Other organizations wanted to borrow the Residence for benefit bridge parties and late dances. But the most intriguing proposition came from a middle-aged man who had hitchhiked from Salonika and camped on our front porch until he was received. He wanted me to buy a race horse for him so that he could win enough money at the track to retire. To weaken my resistance he even proposed racing the horse under red, white and blue colors. Quite supporting of him, I thought.

In the early days I was depressed by my impotence to solve all the supplicants' many problems. How satisfying it would have been to be the American fairy godmother who had flown with her magic wand straight from Washington to make every Greek wish come true, especially the wish of the little old Greek lady who dedicated a song to me entitled, "Mrs. Peurifoy, the White American Beauty."

"No" was the hardest word for me to say in any language, but my husband had a real talent for the word. His "no's" could charm the stars from the sky. Although I tried imitating his smile and tone of voice, the word "no" still gagged me. Even a compromising "I'll see" froze in my throat.

With relief, I gradually learned that most petitioners didn't expect definite assurances. Often they wanted only a hearing, their day in court. That was one satisfaction I was capable of granting. So in order to give everyone the benefit of an impartial hearing, I served several hours each morning in the (self-ordained) listening ministry.

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Only one group of callers distinguished themselves by not imploring a favor. They were two American missionaries who wished only to bring me greetings from their church in Anderson, Indiana. But alas! On their second call they too had a petition. Their missionary license had expired, and they begged me to have it extended beyond the provision of the law. If I didn't comply with enthusiasm, it was because Greece is a Christian country in which the Orthodox Church is the state religion.

Their visit reminded me of an incident that happened during the King's first visit to the United States, when he was still a Prince. On one of the parkways in Connecticut, he was stopped for a driving offense, and when the curious speed cop discovered his culprit to be a Prince of Greece, he became overcurious to the point of asking, "What church do you belong to?"

To this important inquiry the Prince replied, "Greek Orthodox."

"Shucks!" said the disillusioned policeman. "I would have sworn you were a Christian."

Diplomats at Work

Let no one infer that diplomats serve only with their ears, spending all their working hours listening to concerts, petitions, and woes. In Athens, the ladies of the diplomatic corps performed manual labor on behalf of civic projects and social welfare. Practically every Embassy and Legation patronized one of the existing Greek charities and supported it with an annual benefit ball, bazaar, or fashion show. It was no idle jest when Christina Bower, the wife of the South African Minister, used to say, "Every day of the week one of us is busy saving Greece." Perhaps the most spectacular charity fete was Lady Norton's Gala at the race course, the sizable proceeds going to the Queen's Fund for Charity. Everyone within reach of Lady Norton's long arm was commissioned to work, donate, or perform. The Americans' notable contributions were smoked hams from the Sixth Fleet and crockery lent for the occasion by the American Naval Mission in Greece. On the gala

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night, Lady Norton conspired with the calendar to hang a full moon over the newly built dance floor. Ticket holders danced to the music of alternating orchestras and at midnight supped off plates marked USN.

Besides beaverishly participating in Greek enterprises, the American ladies operated a canteen for the sailors of the Sixth Fleet. The canteen was largely credited with the good behavior of the sailors and the remarkable absence of unpleasant incidents among those on shore leave. At the canteen, the young mariners, and every season they seemed younger, found English speaking company and ready partners for cards, checkers, and chess. There was an information desk where one could learn the short cut to the Acropolis or the address of the nearest money exchange. There were a write-home corner, a reading corner, and a hamburger heaven where American ladies dispensed free food and coffee. My favorite self-imposed duty was to go flitting from table to table, chatting with the lonesome boys, and spreading sunshine in my wake. Then one day, I encountered a sailor from Des Moines with an audible stream of consciousness. When, in the middle of my sunniest greeting, he interrupted me with, "Aren't there any young American women in Athens," I turned in my table-hopping badge and retired permanently to hamburger heaven.

A project which enlisted widespread support from the diplomatic corps was Soeur Helene's charity bazaar for the Working Girls' Home. Soeur Helene Capehart was a Belgian nun serving in the Greek rite of the Roman Catholic Church. Her father had been a distinguished Egyptologist, and she had grown up in the intellectual and social worlds of two continents. During World War II, she was in Greece, ministering to the hungry, sick, and bereaved. During the guerrilla warfare, she opened her modest home and large heart to displaced peasant girls roaming the streets of Athens in hopeless quest of jobs.

With nothing more than faith, courage, and a handful of homeless waifs, she founded the Athens Working Girls' Home, a glorious misnomer in view of the fact that most of the residents were nonworking. Because she never questioned the politics of a girl's parents,

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she was frequently castigated for sheltering orphans of Communists as well as Loyalists. Undismayed, she explained, "All orphans are God's children, and God does not play politics." In the face of political and ecclesiastical censure, she continued to perform God's will as she interpreted it to be.

She was the most selflessly courageous woman I ever knew. Hers was the kind of courage that dared to ask a person for his gold fillings if she believed his fillings would advance God's work on earth. In case her request found the beseeched in an obdurate mood, reluctant to part with his dentures, she would accept the refusal with graceful aplomb. The word "no" held no terrors for Sister Helen. I, the timid type, who dared not peddle even a bag of Girl Scout cookies lest someone say "no," repeatedly gaped at her selfless valor.

As regularly as Christmas and Easter morning dawned, Soeur Helene brought a delegation of her wards to call at the Embassy Residence. In rain or sunshine they never failed to walk the long distance across Athens in order to bring us their personal good wishes and the season's greetings. For three summers we annually entertained the girls with an evening party at the Embassy. In the garden, they would watch an American movie, discreetly selected for beauty, intelligibility, and absence of heavy dialogue. However, the girls' lack of understanding seemed only to enhance their enjoyment of the film. Never waiting for the proper cue, they laughed in all the wrong places and had twice as much fun as we had. After the film there would be refreshments and, of course, Greek folk dancing in which everyone, except Soeur He1ene, joined. No one ever invented a surer social ice breaker than the Kalamatiano and the Karagouna.

One day, gathering together a number of ladies from the Athens diplomatic corps, Soeur He1ene invited us to participate in a diplomatic bazaar. She suggested that each embassy sponsor a booth or stall where typical products of its own country would be displayed and sold. Immediately the Italians offered to sell Venetian glass and Florentine leather products; the Swiss promised chocolates; the Spanish proffered lace; and the French

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volunteered perfumes and gloves. And the American ladies? While I was pondering the subject of typical American products, the American ladies were unanimously nominated to manage the bar.

When my husband heard of these innocent goings-on, he was not amused. Most emphatically he was opposed to the American ladies' dispensing Scotch and bourbon while the others dealt in elegant mantillas, neatly packaged chocolates, and fragile objects from Murano. He could not have been more agitated if I had promised personally to saw a Greek into halves.

So with the plan for the bar vetoed, I was driven to write urgent appeals to American business firms for good will donations to Soeur Helene's bazaar. The list of my letters read like a "Commercial Who's Who in the United States." I begged for nylons, fabrics, cigarettes, blankets, cosmetics, and household gadgets and prayed that at least one company would respond affirmatively. Of the heap of names, only six companies contributed: Revlon, Helena Rubinstein, Ecco Ware, Hayser Stockings, Everglaze Fabrics, and the American Tobacco Company, which sent five thousand Lucky Strikes and five thousand Pall Malls. These hallowed companies (bless them) were inscribed permanently at the top of my shopping preference list.

Several weeks before the bazaar, I fell victim to infectious hepatitis and was sentenced to the hospital for the duration. For better or worse, I was out of the picture, and the burden of the American booth fell on the broad shoulders of Irena Yost, the wife of the American Minister. Under her able supervision, the Americans were able to contribute \$670 to Soeur Helene's worthy charity.

I watched one charity project grow from a mere dream in a woman's heart to a real profitable concern. The dream belonged to Mrs. George Magann, the wife of the Canadian Ambassador. She was a soft spoken woman with bright blue eyes and beautiful snow white hair, and her natural charm and graciousness were epitomized in her first name,

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Grace. A gifted artist, she had considerably brightened the walls of the Canadian Embassy in Athens with the products of her paint brush. During previous years, while her husband was stationed in Washington, she had shared the pleasures of painting with Mrs. Dean Acheson, another talented diplomat.

At a called meeting, Grace urged the diplomatic ladies of Athens to unite in establishing a charity which the Greeks themselves would be able to sustain after we had returned to our respective native lands. Although admitting our individual efforts to be helpful as temporary measures, she envisioned an institution capable of surviving our inevitable departures. After all, she gently reminded us, we were merely plumaged birds of passage. She thought a thrift shop, a resale shop such as she had known in Canada and the United States, could render real service in Greece where clothing was expensive and, for the most part, handmade. From the resale of used articles, the Greeks could reap a profit for charity and at the same time benefit the middle class by selling them good inexpensive clothes.

Grace's dream, conceived in detailed perfection, came tagged with a name. She proposed calling the shop "Eureka," which in Greek means "I've found it." "Eureka" seemed a truly inspired name for a secondhand store, and only coincidentally was it the word Archimedes had shouted so jubilantly from his bath when he stumbled on his principle.

While all of us endorsed Grace's idea, the diplomatic wives didn't know how to start work, and some of the Greek ladies were rather frightened by the prospect of trying their hands in a labor which parted so sharply from Greek tradition. Almost unanimously we shared the sentiment of our deaf board member who pronounced at the close of the first meeting, "I didn't understand a word that was said, but I agree in principle with all of it."

Just as faith, the size of a grain of mustard seed, can move mountains, so Grace's faith and confidence moved us to action. United in loyalty to Grace, soon even the most phlegmatic ladies were doing yeoman's service for the nebulous Eureka shop.

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The first step was to consult the Minister of Finance about business tax exemption for a charitable enterprise. Then there was the problem because we couldn't afford to pay rent.

To my dismay, Grace and I were elected to call at a large bank and suggest to its president, Mr. Pesmazoglou, that his bank contribute, rent free, a suitable building in a busy district of downtown Athens. My energy was wasted in being dismayed, for Mr. Pesmazoglou was an angel. Yes, the bank owned a vacant shop just around the corner in an arcade in a most desirable business section. If we would be kind enough to permit the bank's janitor to clean it that afternoon, we could take possession tomorrow.

I silently wondered if Mr. Pesmazoglou had clearly understood that we expected to be nonpaying tenants. It seemed to be a moot question whether he was hard of hearing or simply a happy deviation from the bank presidents' norm. But I didn't press the point because Mr. Pesmazoglou began expounding his personal philosophy, "Most Greeks are prone to say 'then parasi', (it doesn't matter), but I believe in saying 'parasi', (it does matter)."

Then he escorted us around the corner to examine our new property and sent us home with the key in our pocket. So the thrift shop had a name, a tax exemption certificate, and a roof but no merchandise. In response to letters and a world-wide appeal, clothing, books, costume jewelry, and bric a brac gradually swelled the storage space at the Canadian Embassy. The Daughters of Penelope collected, packed and shipped crates of clothing from America. Jean Desses sent from Paris an elegant white wool evening wrap embroidered in gold thread. Laird Archer donated a number of tuxedos that had been gathering dust at the Near East Foundation. Many boxes arrived from New Zealand, Australia, England, Canada, and from rich Greeks in Egypt. Socialites in Athens contributed from their personal wardrobes and volunteered to assist in the unpacking and assorting of commodities. A volunteer mending and cleaning crew labored in the attic of the Canadian Embassy.

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Mr. Benakis, an officer in one of the banks, graciously consented to be the shop's treasurer and financial adviser and proved infinitely in both capabilities.

On opening day, our prayers for customers were answered with a human deluge. The crowds, pressing to enter the shop, filled the arcade and flowed into the street. Policemen had to be summoned to man the door and ration admittance. Within the shop, Greek ladies and foreign ladies worked side by side to serve the customers.

Eureka was an immediate financial success. In its first year, it contributed thousands of dollars to the Queen's Fund for Charity and to the needy families of the Greek Armed Forces. Grace Magann, who had literally breathed Eureka into existence, remained its guardian angel as long as she lived in Athens. Later, while her husband was Ambassador to Switzerland, she died prematurely in Berne, and I prayed at that time that Eureka would endure as a living memorial to her vision and service.

Unfortunately today, the shop is confronted with an urgent need to replenish its supplies. Many Greeks who had given once to Eureka cannot freely give again, for most every family in Greece has its poorer relatives and old retainers hungrily waiting for cast-off garments.

Unless salable supplies are forthcoming from overseas, the shop will be forced to close. Almost anything which can be repaired and sold is acceptable. Factory seconds, good second-hand clothes, old fur - all may be sent to the Eureka Shop in care of the Greek Red Cross in Athens, but a letter should be mailed in advance to notify the Red Cross that the supplies are coming and intended for Eureka.

Scouting in Macedonia and Thrace

My husband set great store on visiting the provinces. He believed that in order to keep in touch with the heartbeat of the people it was essential to escape periodically from the sophisticated city, for the stout heart of Greece beats loudest in the breast of the villagers

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and peasants. In contrast to the murky political climate of Athens, he said, the limpid atmosphere of the villages was like a refreshing breeze, clearing the mind and revivifying the soul.

In September 1952, believing the time to be propitious for taking a periodic respite from Athens and politics, he decided to inhale the invigorating air of Macedonia and Thrace.

Somewhat short of being importunate, he suggested that I might be interested in going along, but he warned, "This will be no holiday furlough. The trip will be four strenuous days of village-hopping, not at all like your previous visit to Salonika when you enjoyed the hospitality of the American Farm School and Anatolia College. On this trip, I expect to stop in the border villages, most of which have never laid eyes on an American ambassador, much less an ambassador's lady."

Being one who always recognized her duty when it was spelled on the blackboard in words of one syllable, I called for my suitcase to be brought forth and dusted. Moreover, those border villages had piqued the Elephant's Child's satiable curiosity.

Early Sunday morning, accompanied by Maurice Rice and Stephen Calligas from the American Embassy, we flew north to Kavalla on the Macedonian Coast. On the flight, the pilot pressed preciously close to Mr. Athos while I strained to memorize the tableau of twenty ancient Byzantine monasteries clustered on a narrow peninsula in the Aegean Sea. In my present incarnation, I can never hope to have a better view of autonomous Mt. Athos, for the rigid ban against females is so uncompromising that not even a sacred cow can enter the monastic community.

A few minutes later, the plane prepared to land at Kavalla, the foremost seat of the tobacco area. From the plane's window, Kavalla looked like a resort town on California's Monterey Bay, but in reality it was a town economically paralyzed by a declining tobacco market. Because of the loss of their foreign markets the tobacco growers had not yet been

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able to sell last year's crop, and in the meantime their families could not eat tobacco in lieu of food.

At the landing field we were met by Mr. John Holt, the American Consul General at Salonika, who had made all the arrangements for our four days' excursion. At that time we didn't dream that Mr. Holt's arrangements necessitated our breaking bread and chatting personally with every Greek from the Turkish to the Albanian border. Never was I so deceived by external appearances. On the surface Mr. Holt appeared to be a quite normal human being, but actually he was an atomic force driven by superhuman energy and a most fiendish enthusiasm, and the schedule to which he had pledged us was neither normal nor human. In tailoring our program to his own Olympian stature, he had overlooked the human equation of our being mere mortals from Athens.

Delivering our sacred persons into the custody of Mr. Holt, we crossed the Plain of Philippi where the legions of Antony and Octavius (in the Fifth Act of "Julius Caesar") defeated the armies of Brutus and Cassius and dealt the death blow to the Roman Republic. Nearby were the ruins of Philippi, the village that figured significantly in the life of St. Paul. A.D. 50 St. Paul baptized at Philippi his first Christian convert in the person of Lydia, the seller of purple, and founded the first Christian Church in Europe.

Between villages, Mr. Holt proved himself a talking encyclopedia. He knew everything that had happened in or to those parts since the infancy of Philip of Macedon. If I could have remembered even half of it, I should be the world's second best authority on Macedonia.

About sunset, we entered Salonika, ancient Thessaloniki, originally named in honor of the aforementioned Philip of Macedon's daughter. Today it is an important center of nearly a half million population and the site of the American Consulate General. Unfortunately, Mrs. Holt was away. She had taken one of her children to the United States for necessary medical attention, but Mr. Holt, demonstrating his versatility, excelled even

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in the hospitality department. We drove directly to his apartment for a change of clothes and a delicious bath that was something to dream about for the next three days.

The Holts' flat, facing the waterfront on the main boulevard, looked towards the snow capped peaks of majestic Mt. Olympus. Beholding the view, I understood why the gods had chosen to live there.

Naively I asked Mr. Holt, "John, have you climbed Mt. Olympus?" Buyou bet he had.

Before I could make further flippant inquiries, he whisked us away to the Salonika Fair to inspect the various and sundry exhibits. After the Fair, a charming young couple from the Consulate General invited us to a sizable dinner party in their home which was also on the water. However, by that hour the sun had disappeared into the night, and there was no hope of seeing the lofty throne of Zeus. Early the next morning, we began our whistle-stop campaign of the villages peppered on the map of Macedonia. Instead of a Pullman car, we rode everything but a camel to travel in the course of a day from Salonika to Kastoria in the northwest, near the Albanian and Yugoslav borders. It was a journey to be recommended only to those who still possess their own teeth.

With split-second timing, villages emerged from nowhere, and in each one Macedonian peasants had assembled in a mass meeting. Some communities were so similar that once I said to my husband, "Jack, I have a horrible feeling that we've stopped at this village before. Do you suppose we are doubling back?"

"I'll admit," he answered, "that even the peasants look familiar, but if they had already seen us once today, they couldn't possibly be so pleased to see us a second time."

At each stop the mayor delivered a glowing welcoming oration in Greek which for our benefit Stephen Calligas interpreted in resonant punctilious English. (His melodious translation always made me feel that English was a foreign language which I should like to study when I could find the time.) To hear such flaming eloquence under the broiling sun

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of Northern Greece was an experience that kindled the heart and fired the body. Replying in Americanese, my husband expressed America's sympathy and admiration for the Greek people in their bloody struggle against the Communists and marked the historic bond of friendship that had linked our two countries since the days of Samuel Gridley Howe. When in turn Stephen Calligas translated these few choice words for the benefit of the Greek audience, he was usually interrupted with, "Good heavens, Stephen! Did I say all that?"

The farther west we pushed, the hotter the weather and the dustier the roads. The dust we raised that day must still be floating in the far reaches of outer space. My black cotton dress turned beige to match my hair. I marveled at the frivolous gesture of dusting the suitcases before the trip! It didn't help at all to remind myself that Grandmother had polished an equally dusty furrow on her journey to Indian Territory in Oklahoma - I still felt as feckless as a melted gum drop, and just as sharp. The most painfully depressing factor was the exuberant Mr. Holt, animated as a May morning and obviously exhilarated by the dust, heat, and fatigue. The rougher the going, the readier he was. Although his exuberance probably never bested an ambassador, it worsted one ambassador's wife and sent her home more dead than alive - but not until she had probed the corners of Macedonia and Thrace.

Our first glimmer of Kastoria was like a tantalizing mirage of a Swiss mountain village. Against the background of dramatic hills glistened the mountain lakes, and on a finger of land pointing from the lake's western shore lay the picturesque Alpine village. Happily, Mr. Holt assured us that the landscape was a three dimensional actuality. The hills were Greek hills; the lake was Lake Kastoria; and the village was Kastoria, the fur center of Greece.

Everyone in Kastoria is engaged directly or indirectly with the fur industry. The sweepings from the fur factories of New York and Athens are sent there to be sewn into coat lengths. The workers assort the minute scraps of fur, usually inch long Persian lamb remnants, and painstakingly piece them together into a fur mosaic large enough to be returned to New York or Athens for styling. (And some people complain that TV is hard on the eyes.) In the

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finished garment the weight of the thread, which often very nearly equals the weight of the fur, provides extra warmth to the wearer. On this subject, I can speak with authority, and so can Mrs. Eisenhower.

Apart from its primacy in the fur trade Kastoria is renowned for its many remarkable Byzantine churches, some dating from the ninth century and containing unique valuable icons, but darkness fell before we could complete the ecclesiastical roster.

For our overnight visit, the fur tycoon of the village placed his comfortable residence at our disposal. When it was time to retire, we discovered that arrangements had been made for the Ambassador to repose in solitary splendor in an upstairs dormitory while the Ambassador's wife had been relegated to a dressing room at the end of the hall. My husband, addressing the owner, requested that my luggage be transferred to the big dormitory which was more than adequate for two people. In a strained voice our host disarmingly apologized, "I am sorry, Your Excellency, but I didn't know kings and ambassadors ever slept in the same room with their wives." My husband was never one that presumed to speak for kings.

The next morning, we sat down to a lovely breakfast, served in the upstairs hall and embellished with Stephen Calligas' private stock of instant coffee.

Then because Mr. Holt was a thorough man who took no half measures, we found ourselves recrossing Macedonia from west to east in order to stop at the villages we missed on our east-west trek the previous day. It didn't seem possible that we had skipped a single hamlet, but apparently we had, and we cut a writhing swatch to reach it. However, there are some places where even a jeep will draw the line, and occasionally we had to hew our way across the rugged hills.

That day, we visited agricultural villages on the Albanian border, bombed-out villages on the Yugoslav border, and half-deserted villages on the Bulgarian border. (Tomorrow was

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to take us to the starving tobacco villages on the Turkish border, but fortunately myopia prevented my seeing so far in the future.)

As we peered across the hostile borders, I remembered the woman who sailed with us up the Bosphorus to the Black Sea. Gazing towards Russia, she had said so artlessly, "But I don't see the iron curtain."

However, the iron curtain was a solid fact to the natives on the frontiers of Greece. Their homes stood on the razor's edge of the free world, and night and day they lived under the threat of guns from the other side. We found no isolated farmhouses or rural cottages because fear of bandit raids had driven the peasants to the villages where there was the greater safety of numbers. The farmers went forth day by day to tend their distant fields, but at sundown they flocked to the protection of the village fold.

If anyone thinks peasants are a beaten truckling people, he is not thinking of Greek peasants. To exist on their precarious world, the Greeks have had to be durable, enduring, and unsinkable. Inferiority complex? Ha! Any sense of inferiority has been expunged from the national character, and in its place is found an awful pride of race, religion, and country.

Even in these poor, broken, border villages, we ran headlong into Greek hospitality. At every stop, refreshments were passed, sometimes only a spoonful of preserved fruit with a glass of water, or again the delicious pressed brown caviar packed into a candle mold, and once an unidentifiable mush served in glasses.

"What sort of brew is this? It won't even pour." I whispered to Maurice Rice.

"Banana whip, banana puree, banana frapp#e with branch water - which name do you prefer?"

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It was appalling to see what an ambassador would consume for the love of his country. Having patriotically eaten his way through Macedonia in one direction, my husband indiscriminately ate his way back in the other direction. Obviously, Mr. Dawes notwithstanding, an ambassador's stomach is required to suffer worse punishment than his head or feet.

In one town, the monarch's wife offered us apple pie and cold corn on the cob, strange fare to come from the pages of a Macedonian cook book. Stephen Calligas explained, "Her son in America has written her that apple pie and corn on the cob are two favorite American dishes, and she is happy to serve you typical American food which you will sure enjoy."

Did we eat it? We would have eaten it if it had been marinated in hemlock.

Having completely traversed Macedonia from stem to stern and, again, from stern to stem, we stopped for the night in Drama, a town near the Bulgarian border. That easterly region was sure marked by a strong Turkish influence, manifest in the architecture, costumes, and plumbing.

On the next morning, our fourth and final day, as a concession to our mortality (and I was feeling more mortal by the minute), Mr. Holt arranged to have a train carry us across Thrace. Pleasant as the train itself was, often the track did not penetrate the heart of the villages as we were required to do. In those too frequent instances our Commando Captain, Mr. Holt, led us in a disheveled parade from the railroad on the edge of town to the town hall or village square. Most of the time I was just a zombie swept through Thrace in the dusty wake of Mr. Holt's own kinetic energy.

Thrace is the youngest province in Greece. Until 1923, she had been a part of Turkey, and our route passed through several Turkish-Moslem villages, whose citizens were on remarkably amicable terms with the citizens of neighboring Greek villages. Because

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almost everyone in Thrace lived by some phase of the tobacco industry, the tobacco economic crisis had struck a devastating blow to both Greek and Turkish communities. Yet even here Greek hospitality flowed freely, sometimes from the hands of peasants visibly suffering from lack of food.

At Alexandroupolis, our ultimate destination near the Turkish border, tables had been erected on a broad beach for our farewell dinner. After a series of courses, with even more rhetoric than food, we drove to the landing field to catch the Embassy plane for home. At the sight of the plane I could have kissed Colonel Geary, the pilot, and probably did. In fact, by then if I wasn't already a gibbering idiot, I was on the hysterical brink of being one, and there are pictures and living witnesses to prove it.

But ever afterwards when anyone asked if we had been to Northern Greece, my husband answered with incontestable certainty, "Just name it. If it's in Macedonia or Thrace, we've been there."

And we had John Holt, bless him, to thank for that.

Barbecue

At 19 Panaghi Kyriakou
There's going to be a barbecue
With lamb and mutton and
goat galore,
All shot and served by the Ambassador
And for those who think retsina's
risky
There'll be plenty of Scotch and bourbon whisky.
So jot down the hour and day,
At five o'clock the eighth of May.

P.S. At this affair si barbiqu
Your old sports clothes will be tr#s chic.

In 1953 we sent the above jingling invitation to our Embassy family and ten Embassy secretaries. My husband, gregarious as a Greek with patriarchal tendencies, loved to convoke his large Embassy brood under the Residence roof for the sole purpose of having a good time. At these gatherings only two rules prevailed: everyone had to enjoy himself

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and no one could discuss politics. These convocations not only stimulated the morale of the official staff but also gave us the opportunity to know better the wonderful Americans who represented the United States abroad. When everyone, about eighty persons in all, accepted the invitation to the barbecue, my husband decided that it would be a brilliant time to present the Embassy personnel to the King and Queen. He felt that at an informal party, Their Majesties would see Americans at their unparalleled best.

The Queen "graciously consented to be present," but unfortunately the King expected to be in Salonika for "a passing-out ceremony," which, to my relief, someone hastily explained meant passing out diplomas.

The Queen's anticipated appearance at any American fete invariably provoked the question of curtsyng. All the ladies wished to know, "Should we or shouldn't we?" A certain fraction believed that curtsyng was downright un-American. Personally, I never believed a curtsy capable of jeopardizing the dignity of our sovereign United States. To me, curtsy was synonymous with courtesy. As a child, I had dropped curtsies all over Arkansas and rued the day I grew too gawky to continue. I always thought that if ever we were assigned to Siam, I should without compunction crawl backwards on my knees and elbows to approach the royal presence and feel none the less American for doing so. (Ironically, when we went eventually to Siam, I was greatly disappointed to learn that one entered the throne room on her own two feet.) However, not wishing the curtsy to become the issue that rent asunder the Americans in Greece, I usually advised the ladies, "Let your conscience be your guide, and let the curtsies fall where they will."

If a woman once discovered that she could curtsy gracefully without swooning to the floor, she usually stopped the gesture as part of (what one lady called) her greater Greek experience. On once occasion we even had a dress rehearsal for the eager novices. Someone portrayed the Queen while I went through the motions of presenting the Embassy ladies.

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At another of the Embassy's formal affairs a husband of an outspoken member of the anti-curtsey league was so preoccupied with watching his spouse make her obeisance that when his own turn came, he, too, absent-mindedly curtsied to both the King and Queen. We thought that was carrying as curtsy a bit beyond the call of courtesy.

In planning the menu for the barbecue, we were chagrined to discover that the two lambs, which supposedly had been fattening in the food freezer since Christmas, hadn't gained an additional pound in the past four months. So we had to dash to the Greek butcher shop to buy another brace of lambs. Then we supervised the digging of four barbecue pits in the garden, hired a score of extra hands to rotate the pits, and filled a small barrel, (thirty okas), with retsina, a domestic Greek wine.

Certain Greeks told me that their resinated wine was one of the few blessings to have come from the days of Turkish dominion. The tale is that a certain village, in the path of a Turkish onslaught, had to be evacuated suddenly. Before hiking to the hills, the villagers polluted with resin their huge casks of new wine so that the conquering Turks could not celebrate with Greek vintage. Later when the tide of war reversed and the villagers returned to their homes, the contaminated wine seemed much too precious to waste. So the thrifty Greeks celebrated their homecoming with resinated spirits. In the course of the celebration, retsina proved itself such a boon companion to roast lamb and kokoretsi that the Greeks drank it with gusto and henceforth deliberately tainted each new vintage with resin. The end of the story is somewhat like the experience of the American prisoner of war who spent so many years in a Japanese internment camp that he actually cultivated a taste for spoiled fish. Even after his liberation, fresh fish seemed insipid to him, and the only fish he really enjoyed were the rotten ones.

Other Greek friends claimed that the resin flavor of their wine had always derived from the pine casks in which the wine was stored. Whatever its origin, I found retsina definitely to be an acquired, but easily cultivable, taste, and a Greek barbecue without retsina is as

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flat as a kids' Saturday matinee without popcorn or, even worse, a carnival without cotton candy.

For our barbecue we selected cochinelli, a resinated vintage that Helen Lapham and I had lusciously trampled with our own little feet the previous autumn. With this final preparation the show was well on the road.

On the afternoon of our party, the smoldering charcoal, the sizzling lambs, the freshly mowed lawn, and the riotous borders of English stock made our garden small and look better than ever before. Even our writhing old olive trees exuded a special silvery charm. The Embassy staff assembled promptly at five o'clock, thirty minutes before the Queen's scheduled appearance. She arrived a little late, elegantly coifed and wearing a white knitted dress trimmed with gold at the neck and sleeves. On her wrist jangled a gold coin bracelet which she girlishly called "the Marshall Plan." The Americans were delighted to find her accompanied by the King and his popular aunt, the Princess Helen.

After the formal introductions, including Danny's presentation of his pet pair of platinum rabbits, the hired musical troubadours struck up some popular tunes, and the barbecue was off to a running start. Then came the rains! I can't say that we weren't warned in advance, for my neck was stiff from searching a lowering sky all day long. The great consolation was that the rains had delayed until the lambs were barbecued to a Queen's taste. We hurriedly shifted the guests, cochinelli, and buffet into the house where the party suddenly seemed much larger and louder than it had seemed outdoors.

The royal guests had been expected to leave at nine o'clock, but when the hour struck, only the Princess Helen rose and departed, while the King and Queen appeared to be ensconced for the night. Turning abruptly, the Queen asked why Danny had disappeared. An hour earlier Danny's nurse had steered him upstairs to his room where he was, I hoped, in bed by that time.

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The Queen then chose to go upstairs to tell him good night. She found a sleepy Danny in bed with his life-sized Teddy bear, but he became a wide awake boy, indeed, when he recognized his caller. To his joy the Queen, pretending to mistake Teddy for Danny, lovingly patted the big shabby bear and gently tucked it in for the night. When horrified at discovering her error, she made amends by doing the same for Danny. As she descended the stairs to rejoin the party, the guests burst into loud cheers. If she hadn't previously captured every American heart, her good night visit to Danny consummated the conquest. Even the most recalcitrant diehards capitulated to her charm.

When our roving minstrels had to leave for their regular taverna jobs, the phonograph provided dance music. The Americans initiated the King and Queen into the mysteries of the stag line and gave their Majesties a royal rush. Before the evening ended, every man had danced with the Queen, and every lady "cut in" on the King. A lot of Americans would commence their next letters home with "When I danced with the King" or "As I was saying to the Queen," whichever fact better suited the gender in case.

By eleven thirty, everyone was hungry again, and I decided that a tray of barbecued lamb sandwiches was just what we needed to keep up with the King and Queen. It seemed a most appropriate ideas until I wandered into the kitchen and found the cook collapsed across the marble-topped work table. Poor man! So exultant had he been over cooking for Their Majesties that he had almost barbecued his heart out. He had literally given his all to the dinner, and there was no hope of coaxing sandwiches from him that night. By sleight of hand, Irena Yost of the Embassy and Mrs. Daniolou of the Residence produced a tray of something that resembled lamb sandwiches. At least they appeased the appetite and gave the necessary strength to continue the dance until almost twelve thirty, at which time the royal couple nodded good night and departed amidst a round of spontaneous American applause.

Diplomat's DilemmaTo say that an ambassador lives is to understate reality, for the multiplicity of an ambassador's life is staggering. While I floated cozily on the downy clouds

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of social and cultural affairs, my husband's activities carried him far beyond the realm of mundane political affairs. I constantly marveled at his versatility. With equal proficiency, he inspected Greek construction works or planted a memorial tree on the battleground of Thermopylae, where in 480 B.C. the Persians under Xerxes, so hopelessly outnumbered, but never out-manned, the Greeks under Leonidas. On Thanksgiving Day, he read the President's Proclamation to the student body at Pierce College near Athens; in June he delivered the commencement address at Anatolia College in Salonika; and between times he spoke to the American Women's Organization of Greece, the Propellers Men's Club, and the Greek National Trade Unions. He visited Greek military hospitals to distribute candy and cigarettes among the veterans of the Korean War. He decorated fourteen other veterans with a silver star and thirteen bronze stars, and he pinned on two Greek generals the award of the Legion of Merit for excellent performance of duty during the bandit war. In Jannina, he dedicated the USIS Information Center, and in Crete, he observed the naval exercises of the Sixth Fleet. He patiently baby-sat with tourists who missed their boat to Istanbul and arranged passage home for stranded American tourists. In a land that boasts of 366 holidays a year, he commemorated each occasion by laying a wreath on the tomb of the unknown warrior. Hardly a day passed without his driving the long mad miles to and from the airport to meet, greet, and dispatch visiting American dignitaries. Still he reserved time and energy to play on the Embassy's baseball team in their spirited games against the Air Force Nine. Moreover, he was never known to forget a family birthday or anniversary.

Because of natural circumstances an ambassador cannot escape being a father confessor to his American flock. Americans abroad have the same problems as Americans at home, and the ambassador is required to listen sympathetically to the gloomy narration of health, economic, and domestic difficulties. In most of the latter cases, my husband recommended immediate return to the States. One day, a Negro American, who clerked at the Embassy and was in good standing with both Americans and Greeks, took a new kind of problem to the Ambassador. In Athens, where Negroes are a rarity and the color bar nonexistent,

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the Negro American had rented a room in the home of a respectable Greek family who accepted him for what he was, an industrious upright American citizen. In the course of several years, the Negro and the landlord's daughter fell in love with each other. Her family not only accepted the situation but gave it their blessing. In fact, they were greatly pleased to realize that some day their daughter would be married to such an eligible American husband.

The romance ran smoothly until the young man's overseas assignment expired and he received orders to return to the Washington office. Although very much in love with his Greek sweetheart, he dared not take a white woman to Washington as his wife. In fairness to her, he endeavored to end the friendship, but neither she nor her family would accept the validity of his argument. As a court of last resort, he appealed to the Ambassador.

My husband emphatically agreed that the young Negro should not take a white wife to America. Then, to my husband's astonishment, the man said, "Mr. Ambassador, she is waiting for me in the outer office. Will you be good enough to repeat to her what you have told me? Make her understand what her life in the United States will be like if she marries me."

So my husband spoke alone with the attractive Greek lady. As an American, he was ashamed to explain to a foreigner the hard facts of life in the United States, but as a humanitarian he could not avoid laying all the cards face-up on the table. In no uncertain terms, he delineated the grim realities. He warned her that in the great democracy she would be confined within certain geographical and social boundaries and her children would be barred from many schools, churches, and so-called best society.

But she replied simply, "That doesn't matter." Then he tried again, "Suppose you do marry this man and he should die, leaving you with a child. What will become of you, a white woman living in the United States with a Negro child?"

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"I am not afraid," was her only answer.

For one of the few times in his career my husband was nonplused. He had run out of arguments, and his word pictures proved ineffectual. Finally the young lady was persuaded to agree to her Negro sweetheart's returning alone to Washington and sending for her to join him later. There was the hopeful possibility of his reassignment to a foreign country, in which case they could escape living in America for the time being.

Consequently, with his fiancée's consent, the young man preceded her to America, but before he had sent for her to follow, our family also left Greece. So I never heard the outcome, though I have often wondered.

Paradise Lost

On this side of Paradise, all foreign assignments have a beginning and an end. We always knew that sooner or later the axe, in the shape of a cable from the State Department, must fall, but the actual blow found us woefully unprepared to leave Greece. During the summer, reports of the Peurifoy's imminent departure had percolated through Athens, for as Saint Paul saith, Athenians loved nothing better than telling or hearing something new. Each day the local newspaper had announced a new candidate for Ambassador to Greece. First it was General Van Fleet, next Mr. Nuveen, then Mr. Pappas, and then General Van Fleet again. Burning with curiosity but much too busy to speculate on our possible successors, we had turned our deaf ears to the rumors and rumors and rumors and had continued to drain the ambrosia bowl. However, the official cable was a solid fact to be faced squarely and swallowed whole. It somewhat sugarcoated the bitter pill to have it delivered in Rhodes amidst a circle of warm-hearted friends. We were there on a post-Fourth of July holiday with our children, General and Mrs. Booth, and Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Judd from the Embassy. When we returned to the hotel from a bicycle tour of the island, the special courier was waiting with the cable. In Department phraseology, the message requested my husband "to leave Athens the first week in August and proceed

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to Washington with family and household effects for two or more weeks' consultation prior to reassignment." The State Department had decided to feed us no more ambrosia. In theory my husband always contended that every ambassadorship had its limits of maximum usefulness. As the personal representative of the President of the United States, an ambassador is expected to perform on a lofty stage, elevated above the swirling maelstrom of domestic affairs. However, the very nature of his job will cause him to develop strong opinion on local partisan issues in so far as they affect the United States. In time, if he is a human being (and the majority of the Ambassadors are), he will inevitably become identified with certain native groups and interests within the country. By such involvement he impairs his effectiveness and outlives his period of maximum usefulness to the President. Having once known an American ambassador to one of the Arab countries who returned to Washington more pro-Arab than the Arabs, my husband valiantly strove to remain the American Ambassador to Greece instead of becoming the Greek Ambassador to America. Yet in spite of his earnest efforts to hold his head high above domestic Greek issues, there were trying occasions when America's best interests compelled him to be more than a tape-recording machine. So on principle he was the first to admit that we had been living in Greece on borrowed time, but in actuality no one ever cheerfully departed that golden realm.

Although the cable had made us painfully aware of the precious number of our remaining days in Athens, we were not at liberty to discuss our transfer. The official announcement had to emanate from the White house, and until the President spoke, we were committed to silence. Least of all could we confide in our children. In the first place, a secret imposed unfair pressure on seven-year-old Danny; it tickled his tongue and frustrated his open-heartedness. In the second place, we didn't wish to mar the joy of the boys' last blissful weeks in Athens, their hearts' home.

The short interval before the official announcement was a kind of reprieve. There was time for our last garden party of the Sixth Fleet, my last afternoon at the canteen, and a last romp with the children and Bing on the beach at Varkiza. Happily, I didn't dare

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plunge immediately into packing, for that would have been tantamount to broadcasting our departure. However, to expedite the future packing I went about the Residence muttering to myself and making long mental lists of things to be sent to Washington for storage; things to accompany us on the ship from Naples; and things to be shipped directly to our next post wherever that might be.

We drove for the last time to Daphne, the gloriously frayed Byzantine monastery erected on the site of a pagan temple to Apollo on the outskirts of Athens. There, according to the myth, a love-struck Apollo so relentlessly pursued Daphne, a river-nymph, that the child's own mother mercifully turned her into a laurel tree. Ever since then Daphne has been the Greek name for laurel. Of the many laurels flourishing at the monastery of Daphne, Danny always unerringly showed us which one was the erstwhile river-nymph.

Soon the official word of our departure reached Athens by way of an article in the New York Times which announced my husband's recall and Mr. Cavendish Cannon's appointment as the new Ambassador to Greece. That was the signal to launch the partying and packing in earnest. Although we declined all private invitations from Americans, there were sufficient Greek parties and official dinners to warrant my husband's comment, "You will probably go down in history as the lady who died with a fork in her hand."

"I'll give you odds in favor of its being chicken, if you want to bet."

The children partied as much as their parents and weathered the strain much better. For all their Greek and American playmates they were hosts at a "swim for your supper" party at the Residence pool.

We discovered that protocol required us to make a round of p.p.c. calls before we could officially depart. Our farewell calls at the end even outnumbered our initial calls in the

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beginning, for in the interlude we had harvested a crop of personal friends not always on the official list of the Foreign Office.

Our good-bye lunch with the Princess Helen was one placid pool in a sea of turbulent days. Her spirits were lively and the conversation was as light-hearted as ever. Lovingly she showed us a rare collection of quaint watches and timepieces which had belonged to her ancestors. While we were saddened by the likelihood of gazing into those deep clear eyes for a last time, we knew we should always be richer for having passed her way.

The final afternoon was set apart for a last look at the Acropolis, which seemed above everything in Athens to be the "eye of Greece." In a period of three years I had climbed the steep steps many times: alone; in the company of our sons; with delegations of out of town sightseers; and with the dean of archeologists, Mr. Burt Hodge Hill. For almost fifty years Mr. Hill had been, in effect, the American Ambassador without portfolio. Many Americans visited Athens without calling at the Embassy, but no American worthy of the name ever touched base in Greece without calling on the Hills.

I had viewed the Acropolis from every point of the compass and at every position of the clock: from the air, from the sea, and from the ground; at sunrise, at high noon, and after dark when the Parthenon, illuminated by electricity or glowing with moonlight, swam in space like a phosphorescent ship from another world; but my favorite visiting time was in the late afternoon. Then the light was softest and the vision clearest. Standing on the 38th parallel between the marble columns of the Parthenon, one could look in prayerful silence the long way round the world, beyond the setting sun, past her American homeland, to another embattled peninsula on the same parallel.

That last evening we dined as usual on the terrace with our sons. Our only guest was Marie Fidao, who had been my long-suffering secretary and the children's adored and adoring friend. As a special favor to us the compassionate gods did not float a full moon over Hymettus. Our hearts were full enough without that.

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As we were finishing dinner, a Negro clerk from the Embassy called with his wife to say farewell. Just in case we were interested, he had brought along a box of colored slides which he had made in Greece. Interested? A mild word to describe our passion for the Hellenic.

Like our Greek friend who used to say, "I miss Greece even when I'm there," we were already nostalgic for the land we were so soon to leave.

By five minutes before midnight our guests had vanished, the last gifts had been packed, and I was writing the final letter to our family in America.

Early the next morning when Nikko, the cook, fumbled into his kitchen domain, he found me waiting for him. Three years in Greece - and I still hadn't learned to make Turkish coffee! Because I was so loath to leave without learning, Nikko gave me a swift lesson, but lacking laboratory experience, my knowledge subsequently proved purely academic and not at all practical. I have yet to brew coffee worthy of the Daughters of Penelope.

Arriving at the airport shortly before nine o'clock that sun drenched morning, we confronted a multitude of American and Greek friends gathered for a final adieu. My husband nudged me, "This occasion must be compulsory attendance for everyone in Athens." "No, Jack, everyone just wishes to make sure that we actually do leave town."

The customary farewell speeches were followed by the inspection of the military guard of honor and the stirring music of the Greek and American national anthems. Whenever Americans abroad hear the booming melody of the "Star Spangled Banner," their spines automatically stiffen with pride and they stretch to their fullest stature, and on that memorable morning the familiar tune made us stand two inches taller than we had ever stood before. When amidst the thunder of ear-splitting "Zitos," the exuberant Greeks lifted my husband to their shoulders and carried him above the throng to the purring United States Air Force plane, patiently waiting to transport us from the Golden Realm. My

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husband, visibly moved by the demonstrative leave-taking, tried to hide his emotion behind dark glasses. It was his forty-sixth birthday, August 9, 1953, and few men ever received a warmer birthday ovation.

Long ago my wise friend, Evangeline Archer, had warned me, "Greece isn't a country. It's a virus from which most people never recover."

Subsequent exposure had proved me to be a susceptible victim, severely affected, and though ostensibly the patient recovered, she is still a carrier.

End of interview